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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SITUATIONAL RULES:
AN EXAMINATION OF PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO

by

CHARLES NEIL DARRAH (C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Fall, 1976

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Situational Rules: An Examination of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico" submitted by Charles Neil Darrah in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Supervisor

.....

.....

Fall 1976

DEDICATION:

TO MY PARENTS

ABSTRACT

In order to survive, all societies must possess some sense of making people's behavior reasonably predictable. One means of doing this is by providing a series of roles, or by assigning individuals to various groups in the society. In either case, a person's behavior can be understood vis-a-vis the privileges and obligations attached to the roles he performs, or the groups to which he belongs.

The concept of social structure is a partial description of the overall organization of a society. As such, it is one means of understanding the models of correct behavior a culture provides. Unfortunnately, it is often difficult to discern whether a particular description of social structure is based on actual observed occurrences of behavior, or on the ideals that the members of the society profess. A difficulty then with this approach to understanding social life is its frequent lack of precision concerning the sources of data, and the place of individual variation (which may be extensive), in the structure.

An approach which seeks to focus on the individual has been propounded by Erving Goffman. This approach centers on the individual as he or she attempts to manipulate the various rules surrounding a situation. The individual's performance of a situation becomes a concern. There is, however, a limitation inherent in this strategy. Goffman is able to describe how a people handle the various rules governing a particular situation, but he is unable to explain why one set of rules, rather than another, is selected to regulate interaction.

In order to develop an approach that can accomplish the preceding task, reference will be made to two concepts presented by Goffman:

rules of irrelevance and rules of transformation. The former are rules that isolate the situation, while the latter connect it to the wider society.

The approach will be accomplished by describing and analyzing the foreign colony of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. These people participate in a recurring social activity, the cocktail party, which constitutes the focus of their social interaction. A successful understanding of their behavior then must include careful attention to the ability to participate in this activity, for their actions cannot be explained by reference to group membership.

The cocktail parties, which formerly could occur in any restaurant, bar, or nightclub, are now restricted to the homes of wealthy Canadians and Americans. Homeowning has become a prerequisite for party participation, and is thus functioning as a rule of transformation; i.e., it defines a trait which is given situational meaning. Homeowner status serves this function due to the legal and extra-legal difficulties that surround purchasing a house in Puerto Vallarta. Those residents who are able to deal with these problems are frequently wealthy, and thereby more desirable according to the other residents.

A consequence of requiring a person to have a house before he can attend the parties is that the foreign colony is assured that new party interactants will be of sufficient means. It, in effect, says, "Your charm, wit, and grace will allow you to join us, if you are also wealthy enough to own a house." The contradiction between the norms is circumvented, and social life can continue smoothly.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Like so many social science theses the following essay is a product of both my intellectual and personal interests, and the reality of the fieldwork situation. Since these two factors continually interacted to alter my perspective in both the field and during the several revisions of the thesis, I feel it is important to make explicit my initial theoretical interests, as well as the general field conditions under which I worked.

My general interest in anthropology has been to understand how a society provides itself with definitions of reality, and how these definitions are related to social life. By 1969 I had also developed an interest in tourist centers, since they presented an ideal situation in which to observe the creation, by the "natives," of scenes or images desired by the tourists. Thus, in 1972 I was pleased to receive an opportunity to spend three months studying an emerging tourist town in Mexico: Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco.

Initially, my interest was in the factors which influenced the creation of a "Mexican-town" image, inasmuch as the town had been isolated from the rest of Mexico, and did not bear the lengthy tradition of foreign contact found in other sites such as Acapulco, Mazatlán, Taxco, and Mexico City. Due to this absence of contact I assumed that foreigners would have a direct role in determining the town's image via

the introduction of capital and expertise, as well as an indirect role when the Mexicans tried to build a town they thought would conform to the tourist's desires.

This topic of research was soon abandoned. It was true that the town was being built according to a complex interaction of tourist, resident, and government perceptions of what was desirable, yet detailed information was impossible to collect. Due to the mordida system of bribery, and the unsettled question of the legal status of land, most construction projects had some illegal or embarrassing "skeleton in the closet" in their past. As a result, the involved parties were obviously reluctant to reveal any details about their involvement with these matters.

I also found that this research interest was being replaced by another one which I perceived as being most amenable to research. Here I am referring to the presence of a substantial population of foreign residents. The aspect of their presence which interested me was the manner in which they conceptualized their relationship to the Mexican population, for they were both separate from and connected to the latter. I also had difficulty in viewing them truly as a group, since such a label obscured the fact that they saw themselves as numerous subgroups which in fact had no objective reality in the town's social life. I gradually became aware that it was more productive to view the foreign community as individuals or couples who participated in a circuit of activities, i.e. cocktail parties, rather than a group with a tidy boundary around it. As my work progressed, I also became increasingly sensitive to the importance that the foreign residents assigned to homeowning,

and their use of homeownership, instead of mutual interests, similar educations, comparable business backgrounds, or sexual preferences, to determine who they would associate with.

In this essay I am concerned with analyzing the factors underlying the criteria used to determine casual associations. My interest in this topic is certainly rooted in the data collected in Puerto Vallarta. Yet, presumably, the people in the town are not so different from those elsewhere, and there is something to be learned about the construction of social life in general from this endeavor. Thus, while I am attempting to explain the social life of some representatives of a group long neglected by anthropologists; i.e. the wealthy, I am also suggesting an approach which is generally useful in explaining the organization of situations. If this has been demonstrated my thesis has accomplished its goal.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. The Structural Approach

Despite the variability in approaches, the social sciences are seemingly united by a concern for understanding human behavior. Within the discipline of anthropology the 'structural' approach to understanding cultures has been, and continues to be, a dominant force. Pioneered by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in 1922 the school boasts many prestigeful adherents, including Fortes, Evans-Pritchard, and Firth. The main thrust in the structural school has been to describe social morphology. Although individual actors provide the raw data for the approach, individual variations are ignored in favor of a concern with more massive structural regularities. Individual behavior thus becomes abstracted into structural regularities between the groups that compose the society. These regularities can be further abstracted into cultural systems: economic, political, religious, etc. After the completion of this endeavor individual behavior may then be explained by reference to the position a person occupies in the society's total structure (Van Velsen, 1967:130-131).

Typical then of the structuralist approach has been a lack of concern with the individual, as if the latter's actions are, by definition, irrelevant to social organization. One result of this has been the elimination of choice as a factor inherent in the construction of any social organization. People are assumed to act as they do because

of their position in the structure. This ignores the fact that a person's position in the structure may not be as well-defined as the anthropologist believes. Features of social life such as choice between conflicting allegiances tend to disallow the tidiness implicit in the structural approach.

The lack of concern with individual choice, or its relegation to the category of 'deviant' has more than simple humanistic implications. While individual behavior may constitute variations from the structural norms it is infrequent that the reader of a structuralist monograph is apprised of the range or extent of the variation. In describing the discrepancy between the matrilocal norm and the actual residence patterns among the Tonga, Van Velsen notes:

> . . . I found that I could no longer meaningfully talk about the 'exceptions' when I found that some forty per cent of my sample did not live matrilocally. I had to show why those who do not live matrilocally do not do so; I tried to find some regularity in the irregularity (Van Velsen, 1967:133).

The attempt to embrace both variation and individual optation in a more inclusive framework has been a central interest of several researchers. In particular, Barth's study of the Swat Pathans (Barth, 1959) and Turner's several works on the Ndembu (Turner, 1967, 1968), provide vivid testimony to the value of this approach.

A concern with the individual is clearly not a superfluous concern for anthropology, nor must such an interest be relegated to the sub-discipline of 'psychological anthropology.' At the very least it stimulates an increased attention to the various sources and categories of data collected in the field. More importantly, it requires a

revision of many traditional theoretical assumptions that have been made about the relationships between social structure, norms, and individual behavior.

With these considerations in mind we will now examine another approach to understanding behavior. This approach, focusing on the individual actor in a situation, has been developed by the sociologist Erving Goffman.

B. The Contribution of Erving Goffman

There have been several writers who have sought to relate the implications of a socially created reality to the daily lives of individuals. Significant work in the area has been done by Erving Goffman. Through a series of publications which began with The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), Goffman has attempted to demonstrate both the man-made facade of social reality and its regularities.

Goffman begins his discussion in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life by noting the expressive function present in interaction. Upon entering a situation, the individual becomes an expressive instrument, both giving and giving off information. The former refers to the use of explicitly recognized symbols to communicate information, while the latter refers to actions or appearances which may express meaningful information about the individual. It is significant for studying interaction that the impressions fostered by these two types of information may not coincide.

Any of the information expressed by the individual may be used to define the ensuing situation and the appropriate behavior of the

others present. Social reality becomes a factor at this point: "Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way" (Goffman, 1959:13). A related principle is that the individual who expresses a certain social character should in fact be a person of that character.

Social life then is a process of concealment and revelation of information which allows individuals to press their moral rights to be treated in certain fashions. The appropriate fashions are functions of the social characteristics which others have read from an individual's performance. In this way the organization of individuals in society becomes a critical element in most social interaction:

> To the degree that a performance highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs, we may look upon it, in the manner of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, as a ceremony--as an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community . . . (Goffman, 1959:35).

Goffman also notes that the process of revealing characteristics and maintaining social organization is best seen when the process breaks down. Referring to recent attempts to present interaction, personality, and society in one framework Goffman writes:

> When an individual appears before others, he knowingly and unwittingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself is an important part. When an event occurs which is expressively incompatible with this fostered impression, significant consequences are simultaneously felt in three levels of social reality, each of which involves a different point of reference and a different order of fact . . . (Goffman, 1959:242).

At the level of interaction, the minute social system which has been created becomes disorganized. The elements of social organization also may become involved since the witnesses to a performance tend to accept the self-image presented by the actor as a valid representation of his colleagues, team, and social establishment. With every performance then "the legitimacy of those units will tend to be tested anew and their permanent reputation put at stake" (Goffman, 1959:243). Finally, personality factors may be effected since an individual may identify himself closely with a particular team, role, or group, and find his self-conception discredited when a performance is disrupted.

Goffman is not only concerned with how social reality is made by man but also with its regularities. In a recent publication he argues against both the arbitrary creation of social reality, and the postulate that social rules merely streamline interaction by making it predictable since

> . . . mutual dealings associated with any set of ground rules could probably be sustained with fewer rules or different ones, that some of the rules which do apply produce more inconveniences than they are worth, and that some participants profit considerably more than others from the order (Goffman, 1971:XI).

In an earlier work Goffman had attempted to systematize the rules which governed at least one aspect of social organization, encounters. The 1961 article "Fun in Games" attempted to establish an analogy between encounters and games. Encounters are to be distinguished from other elements of social organization largely by the quality of their order; they are uniquely organized by what is to be "attended and disattended, and through this, to what shall be accepted as the definition of the situation" (Goffman, 1961:19). Games provide a useful

analogy since they too involve rules of what is to be attended and disattended.

Goffman proceeds to distinguish two types of rules which regulate encounters and their place in the larger society; i.e, rules of irrelevance and rules of transformation. Rules of irrelevance serve to place a screen or boundary around the encounter separating it from the wider society. They state to the individual what socially determined traits of the participants are not to be recognized within the situation. For example, a clerk in a store is not to pay attention to a customer's racial traits in a business transaction. Yet in other situations racial traits may figure prominently in defining the encounter (Goffman, 1961:19-20, 29).

These rules tend to create a separate, isolated universe, one in which at least some of the participant's objective traits are held in abeyance. Pursuing the game analogy, it may be irrelevant to the rules of a game whether the players are rich or poor, black or white, young or old. These traits are explicitly irrelevant to the activity and their attempted use by a player to influence the game may bring calls of "poor sport" from the others.

Transformation rules have an opposite tendency. They serve to maintain ties with the larger society and to prevent the encounter from becoming an isolate. They specify which of the "externally realized matters" (Goffman, 1961:29) are to have situational meaning, and what aspects of the encounter shall be effected by them; e.g., in a card game an objective trait such as seniority may determine the

dealer, but it would be irrelevant to other rules of play. Goffman illustrates these rules in the following way:

> Now it is possible to imagine a focused gathering where almost all externally based matters (including externally based attributes of participants) are treated as officially irrelevant. Thus, a game of checkers played between two strangers in a hospital admissions ward may constitute orderly interaction that is officially independent of sex, age, language, socioeconomic status, physical and mental condition, religion, staff-patient hierarchy, and so forth. But, in actual fact, externally realized matters are given some official place and weight in most encounters, figuring as avowed elements in the situation, even if only as determinants of the terms of address employed, as when two customers are treated alike except that one is called Sir and the other Miss. In the classic phrase of England's gentry, "Anyone for tennis?" did not quite mean anyone; it is not recorded that a servant has ever been allowed to define himself as an anyone, although such doubtful types as tutors have occasionally been permitted to do so (Goffman, 1961:29-30).

In addition to allowing the specified expression of objective traits in a situation the rules of transformation may also allow them a reversed introduction:

> Thus, many of the minor courtesies that men display to children or women in our society have this inverted character, with honor going to the youngest or weakest, not because youth and frailness are honored, but as a ceremonial reversal of ordinary practice (Goffman, 1961:32).

The above considerations later become elaborated into the principle of the integrity of the situation (Douglas, 1970:36). This view, holds that a situation has a unity which allows it to partially determine the ensuing activity:

> The rule of behavior that seems to be common to all situations and exclusive to them is the rule obliging participants to "fit in." The words one applies to a child on his first trip to a restaurant presumably hold for everyone all the time: the individual must be "good" and not cause a scene or a disturbance;

> he must not attract undue attention to himself, either by thrusting himself upon the assembled company or by attempting to withdraw too much from their presence. He must keep within the spirit or ethos of the situation; he must not be de trop or out of place. Occasions may even arise when the individual will be called upon to act as if he fitted into the situation when in fact he and some of the others present know this is not the case; out of regard for harmony in the scene he is required to compromise and endanger himself further by putting on an air of one who belongs when it can be shown that he doesn't (Goffman, 1963:11).

In summary, Goffman directs our attention to situations and the behavioral demands they make of people. His concern is how the individual perceives social cues, responds to them, maintains his identity, and contributes to confirming the definition of the situation. This individualistic framework is made explicit in Frame Analysis:

> I make no claim whatsoever to be talking about the core matters of sociology--social organization and social structure. These matters have been and can continue to be quite nicely studied without reference to frame at all. I am not addressing the structure of social life but the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives (Goffman, 1974:13).

Goffman also provides us with the concepts necessary to analyze an individual's accessibility to a situation. Rules of irrelevance tend to isolate situations from society by holding that an individual's general social status is to be disregarded within the context of the situation. Rules of transformation, by contrast, allow certain personal traits to be situationally recognized, thereby connecting the performance with society.

C. Society and Situations

1. Situational Rules: Underlying Factors

Goffman's researches into the nature of people's performances as they navigate their way through life's situations may be complemented by a second approach. The concern of this approach is to describe and analyze the situation as distinct from its performance by various individuals.

Although the approach I am suggesting complements Goffman's its shift in perspective allows it to answer questions implicit in his work. This can best be illustrated by reference to one of Goffman's own examples: "'Anyone for tennis?' did not quite mean anyone; it is not recorded that a servant has ever been allowed to define himself as an anyone, although . . . tutors have occasionally been permitted to do so" (Goffman, 1961:30). Why, we may ask, was a tutor occasionally an 'anyone,' while a servant could never hope to attain such eminence? Using Goffman's individualistic approach it is impossible to answer this important question. Presumably, there were factors which influenced the determination of 'anyones' in English society, and most certainly they involved externally realized matters, such as socioeconomic status and class position. However, we are provided no clue as to why one externally realized matter, rather than another, provides the key to social acceptance in specific situations, nor are we confronted with other situations in which even the tutor is not an 'anyone.'

Goffman's discussion of rules of irrelevance in the same example cited above also raises a question. According to Goffman ". . . it is

possible to imagine a focused gathering where almost all externally based matters are treated as officially irrelevant" (Goffman, 1961: 29. Italics mine). Later we are informed that in fact such matters usually are officially given some situational place. It is not my intention to provide a detailed investigation into the status of 'official.' Suffice it to say that many situations, such as casual street corner discussions, may not have explicit codes of etiquette. Even more revealing is the absence of any mention of unofficial codes. Is there also an unofficial set of rules which regulates the determination of 'anyones' just as significantly as the official code? Despite the ambiguity of the term, I believe that this question warrants an affirmative reply. For example, it is possible to view the situational distinction between tutor and servant as the manifestation of such a code.

The above discussion is no idle matter of "semantics," for by recognizing the possibility that unofficial rules exist we raise the question of the relationship between the two postulated sets of rules, and actual behavior. Why, for example, must some externally realized matters be given an unofficial place, while others are officially recognized? Why may the very matters that are officially deemed irrelevant be the ones which in fact constrain the interaction of the individuals the most? For example, the fabled tutor was probably well aware that he was a borderline 'anyone,' a person slightly out of place.

All of these questions have obvious implications for research. If the social processes involved in defining various situations are comparable the same questions may be asked in connection with them.

This, in turn, brings us back to our starting point of the concepts of irrelevance and transformation. These provide the conceptual focus in the approach I am adopting, and it will be one goal of this endeavor to demonstrate their heuristic value in analyzing social activity. More precisely, I will be concerned with discovering why the rules surrounding a specific situation were established, and why some must remain "unofficial."

2. Assumptions

The approach I am developing makes several assumptions which must be made explicit. First, I assume that individuals enter situations bearing numerous personal traits, many of which are of public knowledge. Commonly, only a few of these traits are the attributes necessary for participating in any situation. Presumably there are some factors which control the regular utilization of these external traits for such purposes.

The second assumption concerns the status of the term 'situation.' Goffman defines the term as the rules governing recurring social encounters. However, in at least our own culture individuals employ the term in a colloquial manner. Despite these different usages of the term one commonality emerges: i.e. situations may be relevant to understanding other aspects of social life. For example, membership in some groups may be viewed as a function of a person's ability to regularly enact one or more situations. This assumption clearly broadens the field of research into matters which at first glance might seem unrelated to the analysis of situations. The approach I

am developing can thus initially be seen to touch upon many issues that are not pertinent to Goffman's studies of the individual in a situation. Just as individual behavior may be analyzed as it occurs in the context of a situation, so may situations be studied as they occur in society.

3. Summary

To summarize, despite the numerous insights into social processes provided by Goffman there are important, unanswered questions that are implicit in his studies. Since these questions are irresolvable within his individualistic framework the need for another approach is evident. I have suggested that these implicit questions involve rules of irrelevance and transformation, or more specifically, the factors that determine the selection of personal traits to regulate participation in situations. It has also been pointed out that this endeavor involves placing the situation and its accompanying rules within the context of the wider society since situations do effect social organization, and in turn, are effected by it. Finally, I have expanded the limited domain of study delineated by Goffman to include such topics as group membership, since this may be derived from the ability to engage in certain specific situations.

D. Facts and Analysis

Any resolution of the preceding problems involves both empirical and theoretical considerations. In order to maintain the clarity of presentation, as well as the validity of the study's findings, it is imperative to keep these matters distinct.

Empirically, the research program must be based on the observation of individuals who engage in a recurring social activity. The goal of this procedure is to empirically establish the traits the people bring into the activity, as well as the attribute which is necessary for participation. This minimally involves a thorough description of the people. Any aspects of the larger society that may effect the situation should also be noted. Finally, the activity which is to be analyzed should be described.

At this point I would like to stress the necessity of keeping the observer's description of the people's behavior separate from the norms governing the activity. While both are important empirical concerns, it is possible that there will be a discrepancy between what the observer witnesses, and how it is described by the participants in the activity. The importance of this distinction becomes clear at the level of analysis. It will be impossible to assess the usefulness of 'official' and 'unofficial' as analytic concepts, and their relationship to the actual behavior, unless the data used to define these aspects of the situation are kept separate.

Only after the above observations are completed can analysis begin. At the most general level, I am assuming that the selection of a trait to be the attribute necessary for participation in a situation cannot be understood exclusively by reference to the situation. The researcher must place the situation in its wider social context. Following this assumption, reference will be made to two concepts widely employed in social analyses, structure and function.

In considering structure, reference is made to the observation that the situation is a regularly occurring event. I am directing my attention not to the structure of the situation, an endeavor mandatory in a Goffman-style analysis, but rather to the conditions governing its regular occurrence. Accordingly, the lower-level concepts employed should be appropriate to clarifying and analyzing the norms that effect the situation's performance.

Although function has various meanings in the social sciences the term is used here in a limited sense. Attention is directed to the assumption that various activities and norms may contribute to the continued stability of the society. It is not necessary to endorse an equilibrium model of society to recognize that some practices facilitate the formation of social groups. The function of an activity then refers to its ability to encourage the establishment of stable groups in a society.

E. Summary

It has been pointed out that the rules governing social life may be man-made, but they are not the arbitrary products of capricious minds. Instead, there is an order to these rules and factors which underlie this order. This thesis is an attempt to deal with both the rule governing one aspect of social life, and the factors which underlie its selection.

Erving Goffman's many books on social life have provided the basis for this thesis. He points out that situations may be viewed as though they were surrounded by a selectively permeable boundary.

Through rules of irrelevance and transformation some external matters are excluded from the situation, while others are allowed a defined place in it. Goffman's approach remains largely within this individualistic framework, and at no time does he claim to touch on social organization.

I disagree with this assessment for several reasons. First, situations do occur within some social organization, and each could conceivably effect the other. Second, limiting our domain only to situations will not permit us to investigate the factors underlying the rules of irrelevance and transformation, since they in fact frequently regulate traits which are based in the wider society. Finally, studying the enactment of situations may potentially be of great aid in dealing with the dynamics of social groups. Groups which are derived from some activity, such as the parents of boys on the same Little League team, are particularly amenable to this approach.

The preceding considerations dictate a different approach than Goffman's. At the level of data, this involves observing behavior which will allow the reconstruction of the situation as it exists in a society, rather than studying the individual's experience of his immediate social life. Stated differently, I am not concerned with the individual in a situation. Rather, I am concerned with the situation in society, since only from this vantage point can we hope to understand the factors underlying rules of transformation or irrelevance.

In order to accomplish the goal I stated in the last paragraph my analytical tools must allow me to place situations in their social context. This involves introducing concepts which are typical in the social sciences, although alien to studies of the social construction of reality: i.e. structure and function. Only by using structural and functional concepts which are appropriate to the data being examined can we hope to comprehend the factors underlying the organization of situations, the goal of this essay.

If the utility of the approach I have outlined is to be demonstrated, it will be necessary to examine some slice of social life, for the value of any theoretical approach must ultimately be judged by the insights it allows into the data of the discipline. The succeeding chapters represent an attempt to discern the factors underlying the construction of social reality by one group of people. Thus, it is necessary that we temporarily abandon the theoretical questions of the social sciences, and turn our attention to a group of people: the foreign community of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico.

III. PUERTO VALLARTA

A. Setting

The town of Puerto Vallarta is located on the coast of Jalisco State in Mexico at 20°-31' north latitude and 105°-15' west longitude. It is situated on the shoreline of Banderas Bay at the southern edge of the Valle de Banderas, a rich agricultural area. The bay, twenty-six miles in width, is one of Mexico's largest and reaches a depth of sixty feet only one hundred yards from shore. The town is backed by steep forested slopes and in places extends only six blocks inland before the cobbled roads yield to the paths of the hills. The sole break in this mountainous backdrop is provided by the Rio Cuale which bisects the urban area. Just two hundred miles south of the Tropic of Cancer, the town is located in a tropical savana climatic zone (Goode, 1960:8). The hills surrounding the town are covered with palms, cacti, bromeliads, orchids, and deciduous and evergreen broad-leaf trees (Goode, 1960:16). A variety of plants have been cultivated in the region since pre-historic times; these include corn, beans, squash, chili and sweet peppers, onions, melons, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, peanuts, guavas, papayas, avacados, and pineapples. The region is also rich in animal resources such as deer, armadillos, snakes, frogs, squirrels, coatamundi, iguanas, wild boar, crayfish, shrimp, oysters, and turtles (Smith, 1966:37-41).

The wet season, with maximum and minimum temperatures of 91.7° and 76.7°, begins in late May or early June and continues through October. November marks the start of the dry season, with maximum and minimum temperatures of 85.4 and 64.4, which continues through May.

B. Tourism

According to most informants, Lou Foote's 1938 visit to Puerto Vallarta qualifies him as the town's first tourist. After his visit an American couple took up residence in a palapa hut for three years, while at the same time a Norwegian was living on the island in the Rio Cuale. In 1950 Mr. Harry Holt became the first permanent foreign resident of the town. Others soon followed, making 1950 a convenient year to mark the beginning of the local tourist industry.

The significance of the year 1950 is also indicated by the growth in the town's population. These figures indicate gradual growth through 1950 and a subsequent rapid increase in population:

TABLE 1. POPULATION OF PUERTO VALLARTA

Date	Population
1910	500
1920	1,400
1930	2,200
1940	3,000
1950	4,000
1964	10,000
1972	20-30,000 (est.)

(Smith, 1966:184)

An increase in the importance of tourism has corresponded to the town's rapid population growth. During 1952 there were a maximum of forty visitors in the town at one time while in 1960 tourism was the town's main industry. It is estimated that 95% of Puerto Vallarta's population is directly or indirectly involved in serving the town's visitors, although the source of income for the surrounding Banderas region is primarily agriculture (Turismo Office, Puerto Vallarta, March 10, 1972: personal communication).

The tourist discovery of Puerto Vallarta was facilitated by several articles which appeared in Sunset Magazine, a publication distributed in the Western United States. Sunset's first article, titled "Out of the Way Travel Discovery," was published in 1953. It emphasized the simple quiet pace of the town:

> Much of its charm derives from its pleasant manana mood and its pure Mexican flavor. Donkey-drawn carietas rattle down its cobblestone streets, religious processions from outlying villages file through town singing wierd and primitive chants, pigs roam up and down the sidewalks and hardly a sole understands English. The plain red tile-roofed buildings that crown to the edges of the sidewalks are an immediate contrast to the thatched-roof grass shacks clinging to the hillsides at the edge of town (Sunset, 1953:34).

Tourist facilities were comprised of two modern hotels, the Paraiso and the Rosita, while the town's major attractions were swimming at Los Muertos Beach, fishing, horseback riding, hunting and listening to the musicians.

Following a 1957 article, which merely reiterated the attractions of the town, Sunset published a brief account of the drive to Puerto Vallarta. It was announced that it was possible to drive to the

town from Compestela, although the journey took at least ten hours and required a guide (Sunset, 1963:72).

The final article to significantly publicize the town's appeal appeared in 1964. By this time, the 1963 filming of Night of the Iguana at nearby Mismalaya had provided the town with ample publicity. This last article described a town which had changed considerably and which was about to change even more. New hotels had been constructed and the rates for accommodations had risen drastically at some establishments. The hotels per se were becoming part of the town's attractions by constructing bars, restaurants, swimming pools and nightclubs on their premises. While the activities of swimming, fishing, hiking, and hunting were still important, the more extensive facilities provided by the hotels had begun to play an increasingly important role in attracting tourists to the town (Sunset, 1964:25-26).

Another source of information about this period are the Tourist Guides of 1958 and 1960. These pamphlets also present Puerto Vallarta as a tropical paradise uncluttered by the complexities of modern life. For example, the region immediately south of the Rio Cuale

> . . . is bordered by majestic mountains in their verdant color covered by tropical vegetation. Several palm huts emerge from this luxuriant greenness. It is at the foot of the mountains and in the level part of a great deal of houses are made of brick. Many of them have the walls covered with beautiful twining plants of soft foliage, the air is saturated with a variety of perfumes of flowers, the fragrance of forest and fruits. There is here many orchards which are located [sic] side canals of fresh and crystalline water (Contrerras, 1960).

The Tourist Guides also indicate that the town had expanded to include two new colonias (districts): Colonia Cinco de Deciembre to the north and Colonia Emilano Zapata immediately south of the Rio Cuale. This latter colonia was connected to the town by an automobile bridge finished in 1960 which replaced the older and precarious pedestrian bridges. Finally, both pamphlets note that Gringo Gulch, an area of foreign homes, had already sprung up along the north bank of the Rio Cuale.

Another significant year in the history of Puerta Vallarta was 1963. During that year a movie company from the United States filmed Night of the Iguana at Mismalaya Beach, seven miles south of Puerto Vallarta. This produced an immediate economic effect on the town since all supplies and personnel were ferried to the filming location from Puerto Vallarta (Real, 1971). The town also gained its two most famous residents, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor from the filming.

The importance of Night of the Iguana, and the part-time residence of Burton and Taylor should not be exaggerated. It is true that the publicity resulting from those events served to hasten Puerto Vallarta's development. Yet by 1963 its tourist appeal had already been firmly based on isolation, climate, water-sports, and a friendly populace. More important for sustained tourist growth were the various services and utilities mentioned previously; e.g. the airport and the highway. These facilities, coupled with the town's proximity to the United States population centers, allowed the town to be visited by a greater variety of tourists. No longer did isolation require that a visitor be either well-to-do or particularly adventurous.

C. Contemporary Puerto Vallarta

Today Puerto Vallarta is no longer an isolated village but a bustling town which shows signs of even further growth. This potential for expansion remains closely connected to tourism; that trade will undoubtedly continue as the major economic activity of the town.

Airplane arrival statistics provide an indication of the growing importance of tourism. The following table indicates that the number of air arrivals has increased tremendously through 1968:

TABLE 2. AIR PASSENGER ARRIVALS

Year	Arrivals
1961	10,327
1963	38,802
1964	47,357
1965	53,758
1968	90,442

Source: Economy Department, Jalisco State Government, 1970A:4B.

Another means of transportation to Puerto Vallarta is the cruiseship. Along with Mazatlan, Manzanillo, and Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta has become one of the major ports-of-call on Mexico's west coast. Between December 18, 1971 and September 9, 1972 thirty-five such ships were scheduled to anchor off the town, usually arriving at 8 a.m. and departing at midnight the same day (Turismo Office, Puerto Vallarta, March 10, 1972: Personal Communication).

Including the one-day stopovers of the cruiseships, it is possible to divide Puerto Vallarta's visitors into five types: ship passengers, air tour purchasers, airplane arrivals, bus passengers and automobile drivers.[1] The expenditures of these various types of visitors are estimated as follows:

TABLE 3. TOURIST EXPENDITURES (U.S. DOLLARS)

Type	Daily Expenditures	Type of Expenditures	Length of Visit
Cruiseship	$20.00	tours, gifts	1 day
Air tour[2]	20.00	food, gifts	7-14 days
Airplane	20.00 - 50.00	hotel, food, nightclubs	3-4 days
Bus	10.00	room, food	3-4 days
Auto	15.00	room, food	3-4 days

Source: Turismo Office, Puerto Vallarta, March 7, 1942: personal communication.

The majority of these tourists are from the United States, although there is a seasonal variation in the tourist profile:

TABLE 4. TOURIST COMPOSITION BY NATION

Nationality	Dry Season	Wet Season
American	50%	40%
Canadian	30%	10%
Mexican	20%	50%

Source: Turismo Office, Puerto Vallarta, March 7, 1972: personal communication.

Another indication of the growing importance of the tourist trade is hotel capacity. In contrast to the meager facilities in the 1940's and early 1950's there were 1,542 rooms available in 1969. Several hotels are expanding their facilities by an estimated 400 rooms and several more proposed hotels will provide even more accommodations (Economy Department, Jalisco State Government, 1970A:5B).

There has also been a qualitative change in the accommodations available, primarily visible in the construction of luxury hotels. The Economy Department divides the hotels into the following categories: five large luxury hotels, fifteen first-class hotels and apartments, twenty-nine boarding houses and medium class hotels, and nineteen non-classified abodes (Economy Department, Jalisco State Government 1970A: 4B).

Public investment in both Puerto Vallarta and the Banderas region has been extensive, totalling over 400,000,000 pesos by 1969 (see Appendix I). This impressive investment should not be considered solely an attempt by the government to stimulate Puerto Vallarta's tourist industry, for two other factors are involved. First, the government considers the town to be the center of a future resort area spanning the Jalisco Coast and extending north into Nayarit. While Puerto Vallarta will undoubtedly retain its importance as a tourist attraction it is likely that in the future an increasing number of visitors will merely pass through the town on their way to nearby resorts. The following governmental evaluation supports such a possibility:

> The coast of Jalisco has in terms of tourism a great future. Puerto Vallarta has been transformed into one of the principal foundations for the development of national and international tourism. The investors with a deep insight into the future have participated in the development of various places of great attraction: Barra de Navidad, Melaque, El Tamarindo, Cuastecomate, La Tambora, La Manzanilla, Tenacatita, Careyes, Careyitos, and Chamela. In a very few years, in an accelerated way, the hotels have multiplied, as have recreation facilities and necessary installations to make the stay of an occasional or permanent visitor most agreeable and prolonged. Nevertheless, the improvements [sic] until now have been minimal in relation to the great future of tourism in this privileged zone. (Economy Department, Jalisco State Government 1970A: 8A).

The second factor involved in the relationship between public investment and tourism is the area's natural resources. The Banderas region contains Jalisco's most productive farmland with nearly 140,000 hectares of land under cultivation. Mineral deposits estimated at 11,037,000 tons are located in the hills behind the town. The mountain forests also hold vast reserves of hardwood timber. Finally, the Bay is rich in sealife including shrimp, lobsters, abalone, clams, turtles and swordfish. The exploitation of these resources is one of the goals of the Federal Government's investment in the region, and the construction of the various transportation facilities must be considered in relation to this goal.

Any analysis of the town's potential growth must recognize that development is largely out of local control. Thus, the attitudes expressed by both tourists and residents regarding the preservation of the town's appeal must be balanced against the long-term plans developed by the government and its investment towards these ends. Although a definitive answer is premature, two factors must be acknowledged when attempting to predict the future of the town. First, while the town will change, it need not become a high-density population center since

considerable beachfront land is available. Second, it is unlikely that attempts to preserve the small-town charm of Puerto Vallarta will be allowed to interfere with government's desire to make the town the distribution center of the Jalisco Coast.

There has also been a heavy private investment in Puerto Vallarta which is concentrated primarily in hotel construction: between 1965 and 1969 over 200,000,000 pesos were invested in hotels (see Appendix II). Other private investments have been made in private homes and apartments, restaurants, banks, markets, and other stores.

IV. THE FOREIGN RESIDENTS

A. Introduction

This chapter will attempt to fulfill the primary descriptive requirements of the approach suggested in Chapter two. Specifically, a group of individuals (the foreign residents of Puerto Vallarta), who participate in a recurring social activity (cocktail parties), will be described. The goal of this description is to establish the various traits that the people bring into the activity, and, more importantly, to determine which traits they feel provide the bases for sociability in the town.

Accordingly, the chapter includes a general history of the foreign community in Puerto Vallarta, a description of the groupings they feel describe their comrade's social lives, and the activity which all participate in: the parties. Included in this latter section is a description of a typical party, and a review of their definition, frequency, and duration.

B. Background

A growing number of Puerto Vallarta's residents are citizens of the United States and Canada. The Foreign Colony Directory of Puerto Vallarta: 1971 lists three hundred sixty-three foreign residents in the town, a figure which is corroborated by the largest house rental

agency in the town. This firm, Ramar, S.A., estimates there were four hundred foreign residents living in nearly two hundred houses during 1972. According to two members of the committee which compiled the foreign directory most of those residents live in the town for three to six months of the year, although thirty individuals remain for eleven or twelve months. The same sources indicate that, while frequent visitors to Puerto Vallarta may be included in the directory, virtually all of those listed in the booklet own homes in the town, with a small number renting apartments.[3]

Initially attracted by the region's climate, beaches, and friendly people, the first foreign residents arrived in Puerto Vallarta between ten and twenty years ago and built their houses among those of the town's Mexicans. This early construction was effectively limited to the south by the Rio Cuale and was concentrated near the north bank of the river. By 1965 this area, known locally as Gringo Gulch, had become a foreign enclave; however, a few Mexicans still reside in the area.

The town's early foreign residents also constructed houses along the steeper streets behind Puerto Vallarta's business district. Here the foreigners remained in the minority, and it is common to find the larger, colonial style houses of the foreigners built between the simple one-room houses of the Mexicans, with chickens and an occasional pig roaming the streets.

With the building of the automobile bridge across the Rio Cuale in 1960 the region south of the river was accessible the entire year. Development first began in the triangular shaped flat-lands which are

bounded by the river, Los Muertos beach, and the steep hills. Here both Mexicans and Americans built their homes during the nineteen sixties and the region remains a mixture of architectural styles ranging from a massive colonial mansion to thatch-walled huts. Within the past six years a residential neighborhood has been built above the cliffs south of Los Muertos beach. Previously no homes had existed in this area and it has developed exclusively as a foreign residence area. House prices in the area range from $80,000 (U.S.) to over $200,000 (U.S.) and the homes accordingly have swimming pools, sweeping views, access to secluded beaches, numerous guest rooms or a guest house, and impressive colonial or modernistic facades.

In 1972 the foreign residents were building homes in yet more areas. Sites in the small town of Bucerias, several miles north of Puerto Vallarta had been purchased by at least four American residents of Puerto Vallarta and construction of houses on the land had commenced. Additional development was planned between Puerto Vallarta and Mismaloya beach, although legal problems involved with foreign ownership of coastal land had stalled construction in the area. Finally, several large houses have been constructed in the hills which lie behind the Rio Cuale and Los Muertos beach. Streets have been planned for this area and it is likely that it will continue to be developed.

C. Groups

The foreign community of Puerto Vallarta is an element in the town's population which has changed considerably during the past five years. This change has involved an increasing number of foreign residents

and the increasing heterogeneity of their community.

Interviews with older residents in the town indicate that formerly the foreigners constituted a unified group. During the preceding years entertainment and socializing were informal and occurred at both private homes and public facilities; both residents and tourists were allowed to participate. These parties were spontaneous events which were not organized into a system of reciprocity, as indicated by the large number of guests who attended only once or who did not possess the facilities with which to reciprocate a party.

The past five to seven years marked the rapid growth of Puerto Vallarta as a foreign community of wealthy individuals. Houses were one of the first features of the town which underwent change. A foreigner who was a resident of the town for fourteen years commented that

> . . . even the older people who were wealthy had small, maybe two thousand square foot, houses. It was less presumptuous then. It's just in the past five years that things have grown.
>
> . . . then the hard core American society lived at the Rosita. That was a community. We all still have a rapport and good feeling. Not aloof, but we are the old timers. Some of the monied people stayed and then moved out to Gringo Gulch. Ten years ago they built smaller houses and weren't pretentious people. They didn't put up big houses and when company came they slept on the floor. Now they have extra bedrooms or even guest houses. It was about five years ago. Then the race for big houses with a view began.

Concurrent with this change to more luxurious housing was an alteration in the pattern of entertaining. One resident commented:

> In the old days you never dressed up at parties. And <u>all</u> gringos were invited. Now, too, they're more expensive. Dressing-up has been in the last four years. Now it's all coats and ties.

> In the old days we used to pick-up people at the beach for new faces. There's been a breakdown in that in the last three to five years.

This opinion was also expressed by a Mexican woman who had managed the Oceano Hotel's restaurant and currently manages a similar facility, Las Palmes:

> There are so many more homes in the past three years that there are more small groups. Before then they had lovely parties and weren't so sophisticated. Much better before: smaller and together. Now you don't know everyone.

Currently the foreign residents classify themselves into numerous groups although there is consensus neither about the number of groups nor their composition. During the two-hour interviews conducted with twenty-eight resident foreigners several criteria for classifying other residents were presented. According to these informants sexual preferences (whether hetero- or homosexual), length of residence in town, wealth, location of house, age, and compatability of interests were the bases of the various groups in the town.

One woman, using geographic and sexual criteria, classified the foreign residents as follows:

> Woman: There are four groups as I see it. Number one, the Gold Coast. Number two, Gringo Gulch. These two are separate but joint. Their interests are similar and there's great intermingling. No <u>class</u> thing. Third, is the Hill crowd, up behind the Gulch. I'm really in the area. It's more homosexual couples. They see more of each other than we do, but still intermingle with us. Fourth, hmmm? Somehow these people never seem to be there. Occasionally at a party. Also, they're never a part of other groups. They don't form a group of their own. Not loners though.
>
> Interviewer: Why do they live this way?

Woman: Partly because of locality, and many are engaged in a vocation or traveling. Some just don't add anything.

Common interests also provide a basis for classifying the foreign residents in the town. A long-term resident accounted for the formation of cliques among the foreign residents by reference to common interests, although he recognized a growing importance assigned to wealth:

> It was all one group till 1955-1956. Interest cliques, you know, people would see more of each other if they had interests in common. Not wealth. Didn't matter. If you came you were a part of the community. Then women started fooling around while the husband took care of business. As the cliques formed some were eliminated for various reasons. The Gold Coast brought in a totally new group with money and wealth. That became an important factor.

The use of age as a basis for classifying foreign residents is also demonstrated by one informant:

Woman: There are two groups: One, the party group and two, the people who started late and have less time here.

Interviewer: Are there many younger Americans here?

Woman: Permanent ones, no. Some, maybe seventy-five to one hundred, who stay maybe up to six months. Some are here two months in hotels or apartments. Mainly in the summer. They swim, scuba dive, are artists, write. Some live with families. Some are American girls married to Mexicans. There's mainly older Americans here. They do nothing or paint or read. Play bridge. Age is important for being in a group. I think there are three groups. First, an older group. That's most of the residents. Some are those who go to parties, and an equal number are in isolation of each other. Second, the young group. Third, Americans married to Mexicans.

It is most significant that the heterogeneity of the groups described by the foreign residents conceals a great deal of uniformity

in actual social encounters. The differences in explanations of both the number and attributes of groups within the foreign community of Puerto Vallarta do not prevent the people from participating in a social life which occurs in situations which bring together individuals who, according to the informant's descriptions of groups, should not be expected to socialize. The party, a regular, well-defined social gathering, is the focus of social interaction for a substantial number of the foreign residents. The group of individuals which results from regular attendance of the parties includes persons whose presence nullifies the importance of four of the six bases of resident classifications. Thus, individuals of diverse interests, sexual preferences, length of residence, and location of their house all attend parties, while people under forty years old and those who do not have sufficient wealth to purchase a house are absent.

The parties do not constitute the only opportunities available for social interaction. However, the universe of social relationships maintained by an individual who regularly attends parties is centered on the group of regular fellow participants. Much of the interaction with these people may occur outside of the parties themselves. For example, many of the regular party participants also visit Las Palmes beach daily to swim, read, dine, or play bridge; small dinners attended by two or three couples are common, and there are frequent casual encounters on the streets during the morning visits to the market. Yet most of this interaction occurs with the same people who later in the day will attend the same party. And while there may be disagreements among those who actively participate in the parties few have friends

who are not also fellow participants.

To summarize, according to the accounts given by informants, the members of the foreign community are organized on the bases of mutual interests, sexual preferences, length of residence, age, and geographic proximity. Upon closer examination these groupings can be seen to have little or no bearing on determining who actually interacts, for nearly all of the purported criteria for group membership are routinely broken. Observations reveal that most social interaction is focused on a continuing social activity, the cocktail party. These parties, which occur nightly, both diminish any importance attributed to other groupings in the town, and constitute an alternative context within which most social life occurs.

D. The Parties

1. An Example

A party-like gathering may occur at various times, such as luncheons and dinners. Peripheral events, such as the daily visits to Las Palmes, also may be called parties. However, the use of the term is here restricted to a particular event, the evening cocktail party. The following account of a party is based on notes written immediately after a party; the narration was written the following day:

The guests had all eaten dinner two or three hours before the party began. Most of them had eaten at home, although at least three couples had dined together at C.'s house and two groups of four and six people had dined at restaurants. I had been told to be at the

M.s' at nine o'clock; they would take me to the W.s' for a pre-cocktail party party. The M.s and I arrived at the W.s' at a quarter past nine and found six couples already present. We were led through the large house, which was unusual in its North American appearance, past a swimming pool, and into a roomy pool-side bar. Z., the couple's mozo or handyman, was behind the bar eager to pour us drinks. I committed a minor faux pas when I asked for a Margarita cocktail. Since no drinks of that complexity are served at the parties, I chose rum and soda instead. Soon the others joined us in the room. The women congregated at some chairs toward the back of the room while the men joined L. and I at the bar. All but one of the men appeared to be over fifty years old and, as the subsequent conversation revealed, all were retired. Conversation was casual and no one seemed too interested in ascertaining my credentials, since the M.s had introduced me to all those present. Gradually, a few of the men wandered over to the women and soon only four of us remained at the bar. We exchanged a few more words about the problems of living in the town and owning a house (all but one couple present owned a house; the exception were houseguests of one of the homeowners). The absence of many familiar activities, plus the difficulties in dealing with the Mexican officials and contractors seemed of paramount interest. Suddenly, after only twenty minutes at this house, we were hurried out to the cars and drove over to the main party.

It was nine forty-five when we arrived at the party. The street in front of A's house was already filled with the Volkswagon Safaris typical of Puerto Vallarta. Neighborhood children and their parents sat on the curbs watching the middle-aged men and women emerge from the

automobiles. The men were dressed in soft-soled white shoes, pale colored slacks, and, either light sportshirts or the lacy, colored shirts sold locally. Most of the women were dressed in long, light gowns which were local copies of more expensive designs. The women lifted their skirts and, on the arms of the men, negotiated the treacherous cobblestones of Puerto Vallarta's streets. A knock on a wooden door which faced the sidewalk revealed another world. Behind the whitewashed wall and up a dozen steps was a spotless living room filled with twenty guests. Mrs. M introduced me to those people whom I had not met at the pre-cocktail party party and then began talking with some of her friends who were sitting on a small patio below the living room. I remained in the living room and began talking to U., one of my fellow conversationalists at the other party. The talk centered on his new house which was nearing completion and on the problems of being young and in Puerto Vallarta. U is retired at forty-two and claims it is sometimes an effort to keep active in the town. He repeated a desire that I heard three other times at the party: To avoid excessive drinking and nightly attendance at the parties. After five minutes of talk two other men joined us and questioned U. about his house. They also asked whether I was getting the information I wanted.

I left U. and his two friends and stood aside to observe the people in the rooms. Knots of three to six persons continually coalesced and then dissolved into the crowd. A few persons sat regally, or perhaps idly, waiting to become the nexus of talks. Most people leisurely prowled the room greeting each other. This seemed most

interesting since today over two-thirds of the people present had attended a luncheon on a cruiseship which is anchored in the bay. Thus most of the people had been in contact since two in the afternoon, but they still greeted each other as if they had been gone for weeks. Invariably a drink was in hand: rum, vodka, and gin mixed with Coca Cola or soda in clear, disposable glasses. Like at the other party, the mozo was performing ably as the bartender, eagerly thrusting drinks in people's hands. His wife, the maid, circulated the room with trays of hot and cold hors d'oeuvres.

After several minutes of watching the crowd I was approached by Mrs. K who asked me how I enjoyed Puerto Vallarta. Several mimutes later two more people joined us and we discussed traveling in Mexico, house designs and problems, prices of merchandise in the stores, clothing and the news. Little controversy seemed to be generated by any of the topics, although it was difficult to decide whether the topics discussed always prevailed or whether people sought to avoid controversial statements in my presence. A couple joined our group to discuss sailing and I moved towards several of the couples who had attended the party at the W.'s.

It was ten o'clock and presumably I had gathered the data that I desired. The conversation thus led more directly to me: Who was I and what did I hope to find out from a "bunch of happy people" as Mrs. C. said. I tried to explain my interest in how the foreign community is organized but all of the people there assumed I was only interested in the parties since they were attended by people who could tell me the history of Puerto Vallarta. Finally Mrs. L. asked why the hell wasn't

I up in the hills with the Huichol Indians doing what an anthropologist does. Later Mrs. M. told me they finally decided I was harmless and friendly, and that I was at the party only to meet potential interviewees. According to them, the party itself was too ordinary to be of interest.

The party continued another forty-five minutes before it abruptly ended. I continued to circulate the room, discussing books, and politics occasionally, or listening to anecdotes about the early days in the town, the difficulties in owning or building a house, and the personality traits of the Mexicans. In the course of the evening, I also ascertained that, aside from myself, only two of those present did not own a house and that such parties occurred four to seven nights per week. At eleven o'clock approximately half of the guests departed and soon afterward the remaining guests paid their respects to the hostess and tottered off towards their cars. That ended the day's partying and as Mrs. M. said in the car "that's about all that ever happens."

2. Frequency and Duration

The observations made at this party were augmented by attendance of five other such events which allow the following generalizations about the cocktail parties. Typically the party is a one to two hour gathering which is hosted by an individual or a couple, and which occurs in their home. The parties begin between eight thirty and nine o'clock and continue until ten or eleven o'clock, although guests need not stay for the full time. In the case of the party described the persons attending were reunited after a separation of only six hours; in most cases the separation

is longer. The interviews with the party participants and an additional survey of twenty persons who attended the final party which was observed confirmed that the longest separation of an individual from either a party or another activity which is regularly attended by party participants, such as the lunches at Las Palmes, is three days. Thus most guests at a party are acquainted with all other persons present, thereby making introductions unnecessary. The parties range in size from thirty-two to sixty guests, although informants reported that parties during the Christmas season may include seventy-five persons.

The parties occur between four and seven times a week. While a participant need not attend all of the parties in a given week, he or she must attend at least one or two. The probable basis for this expectation is that by not committing himself totally to party attendance an individual may hope to avoid the obligation of reciprocating the hospitality of others. Attendance and frequency of the parties is also dependent upon the seasons. The American residents who do not live in Puerto Vallarta the entire year begin to return to the town in late November and early December. This corresponds to the end of the wet season and the start of the cooler dry season. Most residents are occupying their houses by Christmas and the parties are large and occur nightly: during late December and January there may be more than one per night. The level of party activity decreases slightly after the Christmas holidays but large, nightly parties are the rule until March or April. During Semana Santa, the weeklong holiday from Palm Sunday to Easter, the town is filled with Mexican tourists from Guadalajara. This marks the end of the intense partying period since many resident Americans leave the

town during this week for their homes in the United States or Canada. In May more residents depart in anticipation of the wet season which begins in June and only thirty party participants who live ten to twelve months of the year in Puerto Vallarta remain. Accordingly, the parties are smaller and less frequent during the summer months although the same pattern of organization continues. The reduction in the level of activity continues until November when the party participants who had departed in June begin their return for the winter.

While there is no precisely determined schedule of party-hosting, it is implicit that regular participants will in turn host parties of comparable size and cost. This sentiment is evidenced by comments such as "Whose turn is it next to have the party?" and references to "pay back" parties to be held by those persons who had attended more parties than deemed acceptable. For example, one lady referred to a party which was to be held later the same day as follows:

> Interviewer: Does everyone host an equal number of parties?
>
> Woman: Well, ideally yes. Some people don't though. Not free-loaders really and there are only a few people who don't have parties too often. It does cost you know. W.'s party cost nearly five hundred dollars but it was catered. Mine was less elaborate and I did all the work so it cost only one hundred or one hundred fifty dollars. The party we are going to tonight is being given by K. and she can't really afford to have more than two or three a season. It's alright because we love her and there are so few like her but we still kidded her about having a payback party. This one is to repay everyone for four or five months of parties.

The expectation that regular party participants should reciprocate the hospitality they have received is also confirmed by informants' accounts of their own party activity. Each of the eighteen regular

participants indicated they had hosted a minimum of two parties during the 1971-72 season and four informants claimed to have hosted over six parties during the period.

The parties then are not isolated, spontaneous events, but occur regularly and are attended each time by a core of the same people. For example, of the forty-two individuals present at the party previously described, thirty-five attended a party two nights later. While willingness and ability to reciprocate are not explicitly preconditions of party attendance their operation is indicated by the facts that all regular party guests also host periodic parties and that those who are neglectful of this obligation are jokingly remonstrated.

E. Review

The parties can be fruitfully analyzed by utilizing the strategy described in the second chapter. They are recurring, they involve a set of rules, and they result in the formation of a group. In Goffman's terms, the parties constitute situations which are surrounded by rules of irrelevance and transformation. Wealth, sex, age, race, and background are all deemed irrelevant to party attendance: "charm, wit, and grace" are all that matter. Yet one trait functions as a rule of transformation which is critical for attending the parties. This trait, homeowning, is the attribute selected which serves as a key to the world of the foreign community. Possessing this trait, the new resident will automatically be granted an invitation to the parties, and barring a peccadillo, will find his social life centered in that activity.

Homeownership can clearly be analyzed as an attribute which serves as a rule of transformation. And Goffman's perspective is adequate for delineating this fact. However, his approach provides no clue as to why homeowning, and not sexual preferences, age, etc., is the one personal trait that has become critical to party attendance. In order to answer this question it is obvious that the situation must be placed in its social context. Contrary to Goffman's view, situations do involve wider matters of social organization. Homeowning is not merely an attribute which permits someone to engage in a specific situation. It is an externally realized matter which introduces the socioeconomic status of people into a supposedly isolated social universe. Thus any analysis must incorporate the situation into its milieu, since, in fact, homeowning is inextricably tied to both local contingencies effecting the legal status of land and housebuilding, and the general socioeconomic rank of homeowners. Accordingly, the next chapter will provide information about the critical attribute's wider social context necessary for performing such an analysis.

V. HOMEOWNING

A. Introduction

The preceding chapter demonstrated that the personal trait which is critical for participating in the parties is homeowning. Yet homeowning is not merely one element in the isolated world of the cocktail parties. It is also indicative of the general socio-economic status of those who possess homes, and it allows the legal and practical circumstances which hinder the homeowner to be expressed in the parties. Homeowning then, by virtue of the fact that it is a trait based in the wider Mexican society, maintains the parties' connection with society, and thereby curtails their supposed isolation. In order to understand why homeowning is the critical attribute for party attendance it is necessary to explore the nature of it in the context of Puerto Vallarta. This topic will be the concern of the remainder of this chapter.

B. Types of Land

The Mexican government recognizes land of several legal statuses. Three of these, private, ejido, and federal are of concern to an understanding of homeowning in Puerto Vallarta.

Since the 1917 Constitution there have been two predominant forms of land ownership. The first, pequena propiedad agricola or "small acreage for agriculture," is a privately owned tract of between 100-500 hectares which may be bought, sold, or mortgaged. The second type of

land, ejido, consists of tracts of land of varying size which were given by the federal government to rural people who did not own land. Ownership of ejido land remains with the community. The tract is subdivided into smaller parcels for agricultural purposes and the products of each lot belong to the farmer or ejidatario holding the parcel with the ejidatarios maintaining their rights to the land only when living on it. Provision is also made for the creation of an urban zone. This is ejido land which is divided into lots of less than 1600 square meters and which may be occupied by ejidatarios or other persons. These additional persons do not farm but are tradesmen, merchants, and teachers who serve the community. Such individuals are required to occupy the land and construct any necessary buildings on it. After residing on the property for at least four years a survey of the urban zone lots and a list of those entitled to hold them is to be made by the Agrarian Department and submitted to the federal executive office. The President may then issue a decree authorizing the formal establishment of the urban zone, thereby allowing the landholders to receive legal title to their lots. The titles are received from the federal government in return for the payment of a fee which varies with the quality of the land. These revenues are then returned to the ejido as compensation for the loss of the land since upon receipt of title the land becomes private property and may be bought and sold.

C. The Ejido of Puerto Vallarta

The Ejido of Puerto Vallarta has grown considerably since it was founded on January 31, 1930 by a Presidential Resolution. Beginning with 2,808 hectares, in 1937 the ejido received an additional 2,046

hectares, and on March 20, 1968 a second extension of 4,297 hectares was acquired. This brought the total land in the ejido to the present 9,151 hectares.

The ejido borders the City of Puerto Vallarta on three sides. The city boundaries extend north from the Rio Cuale to Calle 31 de Octubre, or "Thirty-first of October Street," and six blocks inland from the shore. One indication of the town's growth is that the City of Puerto Vallarta is now indistinguishable from the ejido land immediately surrounding it. Most visitors are not aware that much of the urbanized area is untitled land which is not part of the city.

The development of the land adjoining the city began in the nineteen fifties and continued through the nineteen sixties as both foreigners and Mexicans from the nearby hill towns swelled the population. Existing housing facilities soon became inadequate, and random, illegal growth resulted.

The first area which was populated adjoins the north border of the city. This area, now known as Colonia Cinco de Diciembre, was first settled by Mexicans and remains today a predominantly Mexican area. In the nineteen sixties the area south of the city which had previously been isolated by the Rio Cuale began its growth. Due to its popular beach, Los Muertos, it developed into the central tourist area and became the site of numerous foreign homes.

Since 1959 the engineers of the Agrarian Department had been aware of the increasing population growth, and had planned accordingly. The areas north and south of the city were mapped off into 1,500 lots,

plus spaces for schools, markets, parks, and churches. The plan for the proposed urban zone was sent to the Agrarian Department for approval but the department did not act on it. Meanwhile, the proposed urban zone had become insufficient. Thus in 1964 the directors of the ejido requested an enlarged urban zone. The plans were again sent to the Agrarian Department for approval and on February 24, 1965 the head of the department and the Governor of Jalisco announced that all preliminaries to the issuance of titles had been completed. However, no further statements were issued and property was still acquired by trade between landholders.

The next significant response from the government occurred on November 18, 1970 when President Diaz Ordaz signed the following bill into law:

> Decree declaring public utility the housing and tourist development of land surrounding the Bay of Banderas, located on the Coast of Nayarit and Jalisco states, and improvement of the various population centers, for which several "Ejidos" areas of the Municipality of Compostela, Nay., etc. are expropriated in favor of the Federal Government.
> (Translation of the Official Gazette, November 18, 1970: personal communication from Sr. Juan Santoyo.)

The Federal Government thereby assumed control of 1,026 hectares of coastal land in the Ejido of Puerto Vallarta, preparatory to its conversion to private property.

The bill reaffirmed the Federal Government's expenditure of money for the development of the region and acknowledged its potential as a center for further growth:

> . . . because it has communication by air, land and sea, electric power and other services, it is considered to have the infrastructure work that permit a development of the region, and that full advantage thereof should be taken . . . (Translation of the Official Gazette, November 18, 1970: personal communication from Sr. Juan Santoyo.)

The measure also recognized the difficulties caused by the previous system of ownership. Due to the town's climate, locale, and other advantages it had undergone rapid growth which resulted in land operations, "such as supposed sales," which were outside of the national ejido laws. (Translation of the Official Gazette, November 18, 1970: personal communication from Sr. Juan Santoyo.) No individual then had legitimate title to any property, a condition which led to legal irregularities and speculation among corporations and individuals. Such irregularities were seen as obstacles to the continued development of the region by both the Nayarit and Jalisco state governments who accordingly requested federal intervention. This would allow the promotion of both needed private housing and the tourist industry.

In the proclamation the President specifically justified the expropriation of the lands:

> SIXTH WHERE AS-- That it is a Public Utility consideration, and, therefore, expropriation is in order, for creation or improvement, as well as adequate utilization of the population centers, and of their own life resources, as well as the development of the tourist industry in which enormous amounts have been invested in infrastructure works; and in the creation and development of activities which will benefit the Community. These considerations make expropriation of the lands referred to necessary and fully justifiable for the purpose of carrying them out. (Translation of the Official Gazette, November 18, 1970: personal communication from Sr. Juan Santoyo.)

The bill also specified the procedure by which the Federal Government would transfer the land to individual lot-holders. A National Bank of Public Works and Services, which would act as the government's trustee, would be established. This institution would collect a set rate per meter of property from the landholder and issue him title to the land. Although the exact rate of taxation was not specified it has been suggested that a tripartite division of lands be established which would create categories of land based on proximity to the ocean: each zone would be differentially taxed. Although the National Bank has been established final approval of the transactions has not been made; thus the land remains under federal control (Sr. Juan Santoyo, April 10, 1972: personal communication).

D. Foreigners and Property

The difficulties which were discussed in the preceding section effect both Mexican and foreign landholders. The latter face further legal problems, for under a provision in the 1917 Constitution foreigners are barred from owning land within fifty kilometers of an ocean.

Several options, which vary primarily in the protection they provide the investor, are available to foreigners who desire to build and own a house in Puerto Vallarta. The first option is both uncomplicated and hazardous. The foreigner loans the money necessary to buy the land and build the house to a Mexican citizen with whom he is friendly. This individual then surreptitiously acts as an agent of the foreigner and purchases the desired land from its holder. Title is not acquired in such transactions since this is impossible until

final approval is given to the previously mentioned land regularization; however, there is a trade in titleless parcels which underlies all transfers of ejido land. Initially such land was parcelled out into approximately one-half block units. While title to these plots remains communal individuals do have use-rights which they may grant to others. When the use-rights are granted the landholder receives a payment, making the entire transaction similar to a legal sale. Such transactions are the means by which both foreigners and Mexican citizens acquire lots of ejido land.

Throughout a transaction of this sort the Mexican agent remains the nominal owner of the land and the house. The foreigner may later engage an attorney to manage the estate but he still has little protection of his investment. Continued occupancy of the house is very much dependent upon the good will of the agent involved.

A second option, which today is the most common means of holding land, involves the establishment of a Mexican corporation. This institution must be comprised only of Mexican citizens who act as agents for the foreigner. The corporation acquires the desired lot in the same manner as the previous option and, through the revenue collected by the sale of stock to the foreigner, builds the house upon it. When the house is completed it is recorded for tax purposes and a lease favorable to the foreign shareholder-occupant is drawn up. This document is valid for ten years and is renewable.

Under Mexican law the controller of the shares of stock is the controller of the corporation. Furthermore, stock may be held by a

foreigner. This is the protection which is absent in the first option since in exchange for the money to acquire the land and construct a house upon it the investor receives the stock, thereby giving him control of the corporation. This protection allows him to replace the manager and founders of the corporation at will.

The expense involved in this procedure is nominal. A corporation started with $8,000 (U.S.) capital requires $1,000 (U.S.) in taxes, notarial fees, and for the registration of the transaction. This fee is offset since there are no corporate taxes if the enterprise is not operating at a profit (Juan Santoyo, April 23, 1972: personal communication).

The final and safest legal option is the bank trust. This procedure is increasing in popularity but has been of minor importance. Two factors reduce its effectiveness. First, some landholders choose to maintain a corporation since property held in this manner may be rented while houses held in trust may only be occupied by the specified beneficiary. More importantly, a trust may only be established for fully titled property. Thus only the houses located within the City of Puerto Vallarta may be held in trust since they are the only ones located on titled lots.

Trusts are authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Relations which reviews each case and decides on the advisability of granting the necessary permits. If the permits are issued a local credit institution acts as trustee for the estate; in no case does the foreigner receive title to the land. The Presidential ruling of April 30, 1971

made this clear: Permits will only be issued

> . . . provided the purpose of the acquisition be that of permitting exclusively the utilization of such property and it being taken advantage of by the beneficiaries of the trust without granting real rights to the property . . . (Translation of the Diario Official, April 30, 1972: personal communication from Sr. Juan Santoyo).

The trust property is leased by the beneficiary for a maximum of ten years and the whole trust may not exceed thirty years. At that time the trust institution may transfer ownership to people who legally may acquire it, including a new trust or corporation established by the foreigner.

This option is the safest since it is managed by a credit institution that is regulated by the Federal Government. The only risk is that the government itself will refuse to honor the trusts. While such a drastic step is unlikely, its occurrence would certainly also entail the nullification of the other forms of landholding.

E. Renting

In addition to the hotel and apartment accommodations there are a number of private houses available for rent at different times of the year. Most are owned by foreigners and rented in their absence for one week or longer. The fee is between $105 (U.S.) to $1,500 (U.S.) per week and includes utilities, an automobile, maintenance services, and a maid.

Ramar, S.A., the largest rental-maintenance agency in Puerto Vallarta, estimates there were four hundred foreign residents in 1972 living in approximately two hundred houses. One hundred twenty-five to

one hundred thirty of these homes are never rented, leaving Ramar and the other rental agencies with sixty homes to rent.

F. Construction

A second area of external matters affecting the possession of a house are the problems which are involved in construction. Specific examples of these difficulties are presented in the following chapter: here it remains to describe the bases of these problems.

The construction of a house invariably involves a degree of face-to-face interaction with the architect, contractor, and sub-contractors. While most architects speak fluent English communication becomes more difficult with those parties who are constructing the house. Thus the foreigner who does not speak Spanish with proficiency is at a great disadvantage in expressing his instructions for the actual construction of the house. One common solution to this problem is to engage a Mexican contractor or go-between who is bilingual, but this exposes the foreigner to further risks, specifically the uncertainty that instructions are being properly communicated and the possibility of collusion between the go-between and the builders. The examples in the following chapter clearly illustrate this danger. Trust placed in the hands of such an individual may be exploited since there generally are no means to confirm the honesty of the person involved.

The quality of the building materials presents further complications. Cement may be improperly mixed, tile may be chipped or poorly glazed, and wood may be installed before it is seasoned. Another problem

is that many materials, such as basins and light fixtures, may simply not be available, or may be of poor design and appearance. The house then must be designed to utilize readily available, high quality materials if repeated delays are to be avoided. It is a desire to expand this restricted number of materials (wood, brick, tile and iron bars) which frequently leads to difficulties in construction.

The abilities of both the contractor and the workers present further problems. While many contractors are competent, others have little training or experience and are merely capitalizing on the demand for houses. The contractors are subject to few legal regulations, and the foreign housebuilder has few channels available through which to seek redress against a recalcitrant builder. The workers involved in building the house also range greatly in ability. Competence in traditional techniques such as bricklaying or iron work is generally high, while the skills necessary to execute the more elaborate aspects of the foreigners' houses may be missing. This current paucity of skilled workers is a result of their traditional absence in a small rural town and the increased demand for housing. Frequently then, both the contractors and laborers may be called on to execute designs involving skills with which they are unfamiliar.

A difficulty related to the preceding one is the reluctance of both contractors and laborers to execute designs of which they do not approve. Many of the new luxurious foreign homes do not comply with traditional local values in design. For example, stuccoed exteriors are prized by Mexican housebuilders as symbols of prosperity: the unfinished brick represents an inability to afford the proper finishing

of the house. Yet virtually all foreign homes are built of unfinished brick. An American contractor reported that he nearly had a strike in 1966 when his workers discovered the house they were building was to be finished without stucco. Other times the conflict of values manifests itself in an inability for the Mexican worker or contractor to understand the significance attached by the foreigner to particular features of his house.

The final and most apparent difficulty in housebuilding is the dishonesty attributed to many contractors. While it is impossible to assess the extent of this condition, or to separate it from problems in communication and differences in values, dishonest building practices no doubt exist, as the examples in the following chapter indicate. Specific dishonest practices include reselling materials, misrepresenting the skills of the builder, over-charging for labor and materials, and continually increasing the price of the finished house as construction proceeds.

A result of all these difficulties in housebuilding is that the foreign homeowner must assume responsibility for the construction of his house. It is frequently impossible to arrange for the building of a house and then depart from Puerto Vallarta, awaiting its completion. Most homebuilders choose to remain in the town during the construction of their house to oversee its progress, a task for which few are well equipped.

G. Summary

Home ownership provides an indication of a person's general socio-economic status since anyone attempting to build a house must possess a certain degree of wealth. The difficulties cited obviously imply their resolution by the local homeowners. Thus the individuals who do manage to build a house can be assumed to occupy a fairly high position on most social and economic scales.

Homeowning also allows rules and practical problems based in the wider society to be indirectly introduced into the parties. This is accomplished via the requirement that a party must occur in a private home. Such a definition not only makes party attenders "homeowners," but it also permits anything impinging on homeowning to be introduced into the parties. Thus party participants are not only homeowners, but they are also persons who have the resources to surmount various legal and practical problems.

Homeowning is clearly more than simply a trait which individuals bring into a situation. For it, in turn, brings a host of wider social and economic contingencies to bear on the social universe of the parties.

VI. HOMEOWNING AS A RULE OF TRANSFORMATION: UNDERLYING FACTORS

A. Introduction

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that homeowning is the trait necessary for attending the cocktail parties. It functions as one of Goffman's rules of transformations: "All personal traits are to be considered irrelevant to party participation except homeowning." Furthermore, homeowning is permitted to control a specific aspect of the situation: i.e. initial attendance. While continued affirmation of a willingness to host parties is required, individuals who make such a commitment, but who otherwise exhibit a lack of social graces, may be abruptly dropped from the list of participants. Homeowning then may be considered the trait necessary for party participation, although not sufficient in itself to allow continued attendance.

The preceding comments follow Goffman's format quite closely. Yet in order to inquire why homeowning is the trait selected as a rule of transformation we must adopt the broader perspective outlined in the second chapter and attempt to determine the functions it serves the party participants. Only when this task has been completed can we gain an insight, albeit a partial one, into why homeowning, rather than some other trait, has become a rule of transformation.

B. Social Information and Homeowning

Goffman has pointed out the necessity for information in social life. Our behavior towards others, as well as our interpretation of their actions, is largely based on what identity we attribute to another. This identity is constructed from the bits and pieces of information given and given off by others. Thus social life is much more than learning the appropriate rules of conduct between people, for it also involves discovering just who other people are.

Bearing the preceding comments in mind, it may be expected that people will attempt to develop devices or ploys which have the goal of facilitating the collection of accurate personal information. These devices probably comprise an aspect of any interaction, although their significance and complexity may vary according to the quantity and nature of the information that is sought. For example, a man holding a door open for a woman requires little information to complete his actions. Since implementing the rule to hold the door open is based solely on the sex of the other, the man's only task is to determine that the other person is a female, presumably a manageable chore. However, consider the case of a man who answers his door on a rainy night to find a young man requesting the use of the telephone to call a tow truck for his automobile. Now the prudent man will utilize all his powers of information collecting to determine with certainty that his visitor is an unfortunate motorist, and not a robber.

If the need for information is present in any situation it is most acute in a hazardous social milieu. The need for such information,

and the devices with which to gather it, is most evident in Puerto Vallarta, since the social environment is, in fact, precarious, and is perceived as such by the members of the foreign colony.

The preceding chapter on homeowning described the objective risks inherent in land ownership and house construction. While these risks involve social institutions their agents are usually single individuals. A consequence of this is that persons who express an interest in such matters are suspected. Most of these people are Mexicans, but there are also supposed dangers involved in dealing with other foreigners. Since many of the resident foreigners are wealthy and prestigious they fear being patronized by individuals who seek their favors. Contact with unknown persons thereby poses a potentially hazardous situation for the foreign resident.

Homeownership provides a social status which may be used to optimize information about individuals and render the social environment more secure. It confines social interaction to Americans and Canadians and minimizes the threat of potentially dishonest Mexicans. It focuses interaction within a fairly constant body of individuals about whom important information may be ascertained. This effectively impedes the entrance of an imposter into the party circuit. It also assures regular acquaintanceship since a homeowner will either remain in the town for a longer period than a tourist or at least return more frequently.

Homeowning fulfills these functions by virtue of the various requirements of acquiring immigrant status and building a house. As was previously pointed out, only persons with particular traits may fulfill these requirements. The use of homeowning as a requirement for party

attendance serves to bring individuals with those traits into association with one another.

Immigrant status, the status of most party participants, has strict regulations which immediately eliminate many persons. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to support themselves and their dependents for five years without seeking employment in Mexico. The current allotment is $240.00 (U.S.) per month for the applicant and $80.00 (U.S.) per month for each dependent over fifteen years of age. Thus an individual must have a minimum of $15,440.00 (U.S.) to be considered for immigrant status. After the five year period the applicant's attention to regulations established by the Interior Ministry is reviewed. Any employment undertaken during the five year period constitutes grounds for refusal of employment permits. Since the granting of these permits depends on the discretion of the Interior Ministry there is no automatic progression to full immigrant status and one to four additional years may be required before work permits are issued.

There are also the costs involved in housebuilding. Few houses are designed to cost less than $20,000 (U.S.) and most are between $30,000 (U.S.) and $50,000 (U.S.). These figures do not include added expenses which accumulate during construction and which can easily double the cost of the house. The trend to more expensive houses will undoubtedly continue as a result of the heavily inflated local market. For example, one house built in 1963 for $17,000 was sold in 1970 for $38,000.

The typical housebuilder then must either have considerable savings or a profession which permits frequent visits to Puerto Vallarta.

There are a few individuals who are locally employed but they too must have completed the five year waiting requirement. Although many pensioners are able to acquire immigrant status few are able to afford the inflated prices of houses in Puerto Vallarta. Most middle-class Americans are eliminated from both immigrant status and housebuilding due to the requirements of their occupations and the expense of construction. The Puerto Vallarta homeowner thus is frequently the successful practitioner of a profession who commutes between the town and his North American home, or he is a prosperous retiree, often having owned his own business.

C. The Stories

1. Introduction

The social environment of Puerto Vallarta not only is precarious, but it is also perceived as such by the foreign residents. This perception is indicated by a collection of stories known to the foreign residents. They constitute both a body of material available for use in conversations with other residents, and information which can be provided to new arrivals in the town.

All of the stories portray a social environment which is potentially harmful to a foreigner. However, according to the stories, the dangers may be minimized by avoiding specific situations or relationships. The decision to build a house involves exposure to an excessive number of risks. The stories are an expression of this dangerous social environment to which the foreign residents of the town have submitted themselves. They express an individual's awareness of the local hazards and also invite other people to inquire about the problems and their

resolution. Most important, the stories are social statements which may be scrutinized by other residents. An individual who relates such tales validates his own position as a person who can manage the various obstacles involved in homeowning and who possesses sufficient wealth to complete a project which invariably is more costly than originally planned. One party participant, the only person who expressed an interest in the stories per se, commented

> The cocktail parties have a sort of a reflex response with them. People love to talk about the hang-ups other gringos have in living here. It's done with relish. I suppose it's a device for building up your own security. They say, in essence, "Aren't we smart since we didn't make errors like theirs?" Maids and investments are the problems. They mainly talk of other residents, sort of "If only they were as smart as us." Smugness, a smugness in knowing Mexicans: "Doubt if they'll understand them like we do." I don't pretend to have any insights into Mexicans.

It is difficult to establish the accuracy of these stories since the occurrences they recount are seldom publicly recorded. The events described are frequently illegal, or at least disreputable. This difficulty in verification is only exacerbated by the embarrassment the stories may cause to those involved. Interviews with the protagonists of three of the following stories substantiate the view that such tales are elaborations of actual events. However, the accuracy of the stories is not central to their importance. It is assumed that individuals have a choice in the materials they discuss. The fact that the stories frequently are repeated indicates an importance regardless of their accuracy.

The stories, which focus on legal difficulties, problems in construction, and the dishonesty of Mexicans, were repeated during

conversations in which the interviewer was present and were overheard in other conversations at the five parties which were observed. There was no decrease in the recounting of such stories as the party participants became familiar with the interviewer. Observations at the parties indicate that the stories serve as topics of conversation among regular participants as well as among occasional guests. The importance of these stories is also evident in the two hour interviews conducted with twenty-eight foreign residents of Puerto Vallarta, since each of the eighteen party participants and six of the ten persons who did not attend parties volunteered such tales.

The following stories are presented as examples. Each party participant is not familiar with all of them, nor are they the only such stories to be related. They are however representative of the stories concerning the contingencies which affect homeowning.

2. Legal Problems

Unlike most stories, the following one was related by an individual who had been victimized by the Mexican in question. The entire story was known to four other persons who were interviewed and segments of it were repeated by other informants.

P. was a local boy who seemed clever and intelligent to an American who lived in Puerto Vallarta. The latter suggested to the boy's father that P. be sent to school in the United States, but although the father agreed to the idea he claimed he could not afford the expense. The American volunteered to permit the boy to live with him and his wife while P. attended a Catholic School in California.

This arrangement was satisfactory and P. remained four years in the United States. While in California the boy met some San Franciscans who owned several parcels of land in Puerto Vallarta. Their titled land was held in a bank trust but the Americans needed a Mexican agent to hold the untitled land. P. seemed trustworthy and thus returned to Puerto Vallarta with several lots and houses registered in his name.

During his four years in California P. had acquired a lifestyle and standard of living which was difficult to maintain in Puerto Vallarta. Soon he owed money to several local business men and issued promissory notes against his assets, the latter being the property registered in his name. These notes were bought by a speculator who successfully foreclosed on several of the houses.

Meanwhile, P. had become the contractor engaged to build a brothel which was reputedly being financed by the Mafia. Despite ample funds, P. did not properly finish the project. He had hired sub-contractors to complete the building but never paid them. The financial backers were unable to observe the progress of the brothel since they had been arrested for drug smuggling and when the unpaid sub-contractors became hostile P. again issued promissory notes. This time he found a speculator to purchase them, thereby ending the annoying demands from his creditors. The plan was successful and the two men foreclosed on a $25,000 (U.S.) house which was registered to P.

Another story involves a man who came to Puerto Vallarta to build a restaurant. In order to acquire the land he established a partnership with a local Mexican without attempting to learn the man's background. The Mexican was a known thief who had no knowledge of

operating a business. The restaurant repeatedly violated noise ordinances, a fact which was pointed out to the police by the Mexican partner. Eventually the American was denounced for being illegally employed in Mexico and subsequently was deported. The Mexican retained the enterprise.

In another story a couple allowed a trusted Mexican friend to be the agent-builder of their house. The contract was signed, construction began, and the American couple departed Puerto Vallarta for the summer. Upon returning several months later they found the house not completed despite the $30,000 (U.S.) in advance they had paid the builder. Being persistent, the couple discharged the agent builder and attempted to begin construction with a different contractor. The second builder was honest but he became heavily indebted to local merchants in matters not related to the house, and finally, issued promissory notes. These were purchased and used against the American's house. The American abandoned the project and departed, since he was a vice-president of a New York bank and did not wish reports of his business investments in Mexico to reach his clients.

Individuals also make brief comments expressing the legal risks involved with living in Puerto Vallarta. Examples include statements such as "Of course, many people come and leave unhappy; there are <u>many</u> economic disasters" and

> It's amazing that the Americans spend so much here. Really stupid investments, like a hundred thousand dollar house with no deed. The big problem is that the Mexican government can reclaim the land at will. Some Americans don't even know that the laws about buying ejido land are still in effect . . . .

3. Housebuilding

The following story is well known to the party participants and was specifically cited as an example of construction difficulties by six of those interviewed.

Two of Puerto Vallarta's foreign residents are secretaries who were in the town supervising the construction of a new house for their employers. The house was to be built several miles north of Puerto Vallarta in the small town of Bucerias. It was to have an oval floor plan with an overhang supported by pillars around the perimeter of the house. At one end of the oval a large double stairway which curved up to the second floor was to be built.

When construction was well along one of the secretaries drove to Bucerias to check the progress of the house. During his visit the maestro in charge of the bricklayers announced that the staircase was improperly designed. According to his calculations the steps would not reach their peak at the second floor but would reach the proper height several feet horizontally from it. The architect was summoned and the following day he examined the building and checked his calculations. After an hour he declared that his blueprints were correct: the stairs would join the second floor at the correct spot. The secretary recalled

> . . . and he (the architect) counted out, say a ten foot ceiling with risers every six inches, and low and behold, it came out on the twentieth step. So we asked the maestro just what was wrong with the stairs. He said, "Well, the twenty steps are fine if the ceiling is ten feet but it's nine feet. Again we went over the plans and they still said ten feet. It turned out that the maestro thought a ten foot ceiling was too high so he lowered the columns by a foot. This in turn,

> threw the ceiling height and the stairs off. We hollered at him but there's really nothing you can do. Fortunately the beams hadn't been added so it was no trouble to add another foot of bricks to the columns. But it took a day.

The story of a woman's difficulties with construction was also widely known. This woman had initially purchased a parcel of land overlooking Colonia Zapata in 1968. When the architect began his design he and a representative of Obraspublicas (Public Works) went to survey the property. After six hours of walking over the hillside they could not find a lot corresponding to Mrs. R's. Later it was determined that she had purchased a non-existent lot. The Mexican who had sold her the property convinced her that the error occurred in spite, and not because, of his diligent efforts.

In 1969 Mrs. R. purchased a parcel of land from a reputable businessman in an inland village and hired the man who had sold her the previous lot to construct a house on it. Construction of the house began but soon problems developed. In order to economize on bricks an archway opening to a patio was enlarged to the extent that it required a pillar to support its apex. During an inspection visit Mrs. R. noticed a seven foot concrete stela had been erected in the center of the kitchen. Finally, the wood for the roofbeams and cabinets was installed while green: the roof buckled and the cabinet doors would not close.

Delays were repeatedly a problem. One room was to be completed so Mrs. R. could lock her household goods in it for the summer but the carpenters had not begun the task when she left the town.

The repeated theft of building materials was also a problem. Tile which had been crafted for the bathroom was misplaced and cheaper commercial tile substituted (the lost tile appeared a year later in the contractor's kitchen). Large washbasins suffered a similar fate and small apartment size ones were installed. A ubiquitous element of local construction is the iron bars over all windows. These permanently placed bars cover closeable wooden shutters which are opened from within the room. Several residents of the village in which Mrs. R. was building informed her that such precautions were unnecessary since theft was unknown in the town. Mrs. R. passed this message on to the builder who informed her that the steel for the window bars had been previously ordered. Mrs. R. paid for the steel and only later discovered that the material had not been ordered and that the builder merely kept the money.

A final problem involved the installation of a shower. The builder was to provide a shower basin by installing a four foot square ridge of tile on the floor. This was completed, but the contractor found it convenient to install the shower nozzle and taps in another part of the bathroom. Mrs. R. was left with a shower head with no draining area and an enigmatic square of tile in one corner of her bathroom.

4. Dishonesty

These stories concern supposed Mexican dishonesty in circumstances other than housebuilding or land purchasing and as such they express a more general distrust of the indigenous residents. This

pervasive dishonesty is considered indicative of the dangers inherent in homeowning in the town.

The initial story concerns the intrigue surrounding the construction of the new city hall. A long-time American resident donated a lot south of the Rio Cuale to the city and offered to finance a park on the site. The deal was consummated and a builder was hired, but nothing more was done. The expenditure for this venture cost the American $50,000 (U.S.). In 1970 a new municipal complex arose on the site. No account was ever given of the land transaction itself or why the city would be interested in a facility constructed outside of its own limits.

During this period plans had been made to build a Hilton Hotel north of Puerto Vallarta. Since the site was formerly a hacienda, and therefore titled, it was walled off to prevent encroachments. While this wall was being constructed, a large pile of bricks was stacked on the property. The Presidente (Mayor) of Puerto Vallarta suggested to the Hilton management that they donate some of this material to the new city hall as a gesture of goodwill and, soon after, a truckload of bricks was delivered to the site of the city's construction. However, instead of using them in the manner intended the Presidente merely re-sold them to the hotel's own contractor.

The second story concerns the dangers of being a young American in Puerto Vallarta. An American in a small hotel was arrested and held for nine days without charges being preferred. Finally he was allowed to pay a twenty dollar fine and was released. At that time he was told

there had been a complaint that he had been standing naked in his hotel window, although he could not recall doing this. Upon returning to the hotel he found that his room, which had been paid for for the month, had been rented. The landlord had summoned the police on false pretenses in order to evict the American and rent his room at a higher price. Another room was not available since, according to the landlord, the police would be watching the young American and this would give the hotel a bad reputation.

Another story involves a group of American tourists who visited a popular nightclub, hired a mariachi band while inebriated, and later disagreed about the price of the band's services. The latter summoned the police who promptly arrested and jailed the Americans. While spending the night in jail the men found an elderly tourist who had been there for three months. He had arrived alone on a bus and was later arrested for drunkenness. When found he was destitute, naked, and regularly beaten by a guard. Upon leaving the jail the following day the Americans reported the matter to the United States Consulate in Guadalajara. The man was soon released and sent to his home in the United States.

It would be possible to conclude from these stories that the foreign residents of Puerto Vallarta conceive of all Mexicans as unscrupulous, dishonest thieves. Yet there are other stories which attest to the honesty and friendliness of the Mexicans. The contradictions between the beliefs about Mexicans' dishonesty and their friendliness are reconciled by several mechanisms. Often it is only the promoters, who frequently are not native to the area, who are

considered aggressive and dishonest. Other foreigners claim it is economic necessity which forces some Mexicans to be dishonest. Finally, Mexicans may be conceived of as childlike. This quality includes gaiety, friendliness, dishonesty and irresponsibility, all of which can be excused by the foreigners.

These last comments are included to correct any imbalance in the views which have been presented. It would be simplistic to portray the foreign colony in Puerto Vallarta and the local Mexicans as capable only of antagonistic relations. Presumably the attitudes of each group towards the other are at least as complex as the social relations which they create for themselves.

D. Summary

The selection of homeowning as a rule of transformation is clearly not a whimsical choice, but rather is based on the functions it serves in providing the foreign residents with valuable social information. Such information, which is necessary in any social milieu, becomes especially important in an environment that individuals perceive as dangerous. By attending to the role of homeowner the residents seek to recruit new members of desired characteristics, while simultaneously minimizing the risks inherent in socializing.

VII. COVERT RULES OF TRANSFORMATION

A. Introduction

The preceding chapters in this essay have demonstrated that the organization of the foreign community in Puerto Vallarta is fruitfully viewed from the perspective of an individual's ability to participate in a prescribed activity. This prescribed activity, hosting and attending cocktail parties, is defined in such a way that aspiring guests must own a home in order to reciprocate the parties. This requirement thus introduces any social, economic, or legal factors that impinge on obtaining a home into the milieu of the parties.

It has also been noted that in their discussions the foreign residents formulate alternative rationales for group formation, strictly avoiding the topics of homeowning and wealth. It is as if homeowning serves as the key for acceptance, although no one will admit to this fact. This realization leads to an important line of inquiry: What is the significance of the secrecy surrounding the rule of transformation described in this essay? This chapter will explore the various factors underlying this secrecy, and will suggest that homeowning must remain a covert rule of transformation in order to preserve the identities of the party participants.

The lack of overt recognition of the function of homeowning by those people who attend the parties is based on two contradictory sets

of beliefs. One set bases the right to regularly attend parties on personal merits, such as charm, wit, knowledge, grace, and sociability. References to class or financial status are conspicuously absent. The second set of beliefs accounts for the apparent exclusiveness of the parties. Despite the first set of beliefs, specific individuals and groups are absent from the parties. The party participants present a set of opinions concerning these people which explain the restrictions placed on their presence at the parties, and their exclusion as potential friends.

These two sets of beliefs prescribe conflicting means of group recruitment. Adherence to the first set leads to an open, easily accessible group of people who associate because of mutual interests and personal qualities. The second set, on the other hand, eliminates persons regardless of their personal merits, and tends to restrict the group's accessibility.

Homeownership, functioning as a rule of transformation, permits the establishment of social relationships in Puerto Vallarta without necessitating the resolution of these conflicting sets of beliefs. It accomplishes this by providing the identity information which is so important in initiating social ties. This is possible because homeowners generally have several traits in common which are desired by others. Usually they are between the ages of forty-five and seventy, are successful business or professional men, are well-to-do, have comparable educational backgrounds, and are fairly conservative. Homeowning simply facilitates the association of these people, without requiring them to

explicitly declare their wealth or prestige. And this is crucial if the myth that participation in the parties is based on personal sociability, and not socio-economic rank, is to be preserved.

B. The Myth of Openness

The belief that personal qualities are the criteria for party participation is found both in the two hour interviews conducted with residents and conversations at parties. This information was not solicited but was volunteered by informants in response to questions concerning the number and composition of Puerto Vallarta's social groups. Nine of the eighteen party participants who were interviewed discussed the process by which an individual becomes a member of their group. All agreed that the party participants must first extend an invitation to a potential guest and that continued attendance would be a consequence of the individual's personal merits. In no case was wealth mentioned as a consideration in accepting new participants. Four of the nine informants who did not mention any group admittance criteria corroborated the opinions of the other nine in later discussions. Thus eleven of the fifteen party participants who were interviewed at some time expressed a belief that personal merits are central to attending the parties. The four remaining informants did not contradict the others but omitted any discussion of the matter.

The statements volunteered by the party participants involve claims both to the irrelevance of wealth and the importance of personal merits. During one interview a woman who had recently hosted a party remarked:

> . . . [you] shouldn't get the wrong impression, though. There just are no economic barriers here. I guess everyone is looked at. You're invited to join the group if you can contribute grace, wit, charm, and knowledge, or be able to talk about what people have just read.

However, the woman later remarked:

> At my parties, which are more infrequent since I'm not as rich as the others, I try to invite one or two people from other groups, since I'm so close to their economic level.

A couple who actively participated in the party circuit explained the formation of groups as follows:

> Interviewer: What are the American groups in town?
>
> Husband: There are several different groups which are stratified [pause]. More than three; now probably a half-dozen. But they overlap a lot. [Names three people.]
>
> Wife: We're not in any one group. There's a large number of people we know only by nodding acquaintance . . .
>
> Husband: (Names nine individuals and four couples.) It's really an older group except for J. and A.
>
> Wife: You either get with a younger or older group, simply due to ages.
>
> Husband: In our group the criteria is that these are the people we first met. Plus J. is an age contemporary. The people we first met provide adequate social life. There's no division of affluence at all. Education levels are the same. There are some divisions along those lines but it's not a valid criteria.

Another man noted:

> Well, we interact mainly with resident Americans quite a bit. There's just more social life in a retirement community. Parties every night. Great social life. P.V. differs from most places in that it's not insulated against a foreign living experience . . . (referring to the foreign community) there are really a multitude of age and economic groups here.

The man's wife added:

> We pride ourselves in that we have no economic, race, or homosexual barriers. It's very mixed company. It's a social no-no to ask someone why he's here. Some of our closest friends' background is unknown to us.

The ditficulty in specifying wealth as the basis for party attendance was also expressed by a man who replied to the question "Why are most of the people here?":

> Most of the people are under the mistaken impression they will be happy, the weather is good, it's cheaper, booze is cheaper and perhaps they have a sub-conscious desire to kill themselves with liver ailments. Subtle things are working regarding admittance to groups. Personally, I wouldn't be acceptable except for my employers. Everyone here has a certain income to undertake immigrante status [pause]. There's a certain aura or something about certain people that makes them possess a particular cachet. J. cares less about Americans and they think he's crazy. The Z's who used to be on Gringo Gulch and are not on the Gold Coast, are not in a group since they bring their own friends along. Gringo Gulch used to be the place but it's no longer got the big, big money. The town has changed in that formerly anyone could be "in": it didn't matter anything about you. Now there's a woman here with her husband and she's always had lots of money. Her husband is a success; she has enormous charm and is a friend of a young foreign princess of a democratic country, of course! This gives her a particular cachet. Anyone who knows the B.'s has a particular cachet. Hard to finger it . . . not money, not cultivation per se. I just can't answer.

Informants who were not party participants also commented on admittance to the parties. Eight foreign residents who were clearly not participants were interviewed. Four of them volunteered that wealth was the most important factor in gaining admittance to the parties. Three of the remaining four persons did not mention the matter while one person claimed wealth was not a significant factor in attending parties.

A North American male who chose to associate exclusively with the local Mexicans said:

> There's lots of well-to-do Americans. [pause] I can't afford to keep up with them. Used to go to some of their parties, but they're kind of sick. Seeing the same people all day. They're pretty shallow.

And later in the same interview,

> A particular vocabulary, I guess you could say, and a real daily drive is required for parties. Their type of society isn't mine. They're a bunch of phonies. First, they build a house, then they furnish it, then bitch about things in it. Most go down the hill fast.

A woman who was very seldom invited to parties noted:

> D.'s party for example. It was obvious that he had invited the right people [names two names]. It has to do with money. It used to be that society was older and cultured, but now it's who has money. People with money may not be honest, but they are society.

There is then a widespread belief held by members of the party circuit that wealth is not a necessary quality for party attendance and that the party circuit does not reflect any economic or class distinction. This is countered by foreign residents who do not participate and who may consider wealth to be a central issue.

C. The Myth of Exclusion

1. Tourists

Distinct from the preceding opinions are a set of beliefs which refute the norm of the importance of personal merits by rationalizing the absence of tourists, other foreign residents, and Mexicans from the parties.

Tourists are widely deprecated by members of Puerto Vallarta's foreign community. During formal interviews eighteen party participants were asked to present their opinion of tourists and to indicate the extent of their social contact with them. Twelve of the informants made disparaging comments while the remaining six either omitted comments or claimed to be unknowledgeable about the activities of tourists. In no instance was a complementary comment noted.

The deprecatory comments were oriented around two concerns. First, the overall impact of the tourists was noted. For example, tourists were held responsible for hotel construction, the presence of disliked promoters, inflation, and the increase in Mexican indifference to foreign residents. The second concern involved the personal attributes of the visitors. They were variously pictured as dull-witted, boring, rude and stingy.

Regarding the overall impact of the tourists one party participant noted:

> In a sense we're fighting the tourist over highrises. The problem is emphasized by shoddy financing and uncompleted structures. There's just lots of haggling over view-blocking and there's really no sort of planning to solve it.

A second regular member of the party circuit commented:

> Most people stay in hotels although some are concerned with the charm. Few get off the main streets. There are exceptions: some of the people do go into the hills. Most are concerned with the hotels. The town is theirs, not ours.

Concerning the personal qualities of the tourists one woman remarked:

> A cheaper type of people are coming now via tours. . . . Tourists generally come to get bombed. People who live here generally are running a home, and with the pace, it takes a while to get things done.

The following exchange concerning the personal merits of Americans occurred with a socially prominent woman:

> Interviewer: When you speak of Americans do you mean tourists also?
>
> Woman: Heavens no! I was referring to the Americans who live here.
>
> Interviewer: In other words, you feel differently about the tourists?
>
> Woman: Well, yes. We don't see them. We're getting more of the policeman and fireman type of tourists [pause]. More blue collar, you know?
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think they're coming here?
>
> Woman: Do you mean what do they do?
>
> Interviewer: Yes.
>
> Woman: We really don't know what they do. We stay on the hill while they're here.

Other residents remarked that the tourists were uninteresting people with whom they had no desire to socialize:

> Now lots of tourists come because of Richard (Burton) and Elizabeth (Taylor). Just run of the mill people who are pretty dull. We don't meet them.

and,

> The American who comes here is largely unattractive, as are most tourists. I just can't imagine them coming here for a holiday.

This attitude towards tourists is also manifested in interviews with individuals who are either peripherally associated with the party circuit or who were formerly active participants. One woman of the latter category reported:

There are more middle-class tourists. They're less cultured, ruder to Mexicans. I really dislike the boat tour folk.

The Americans (referring as in a previous example to the residents) are all reliable and sympathetic.

Later, when asked about changes anticipated in the town, the woman replied:

Woman: When other beaches open it'll be like Acapulco. We dislike more and more hotels, and the more rich, uncouth Jews at them. Let me tell you something: We had a ...

Interviewer: We?

Woman: The resident women in town. We had a buffet luncheon at Camino Real. You know, fruits, salads, meats. The Jews just loaded up: plates overflowing, lugging them across the room. They thought they couldn't go back for more!

Another long-time resident who also had recently been excluded from the parties claimed:

Tourists, American tourists ruined the town! Kids used to be nice and friendly: then came the money. The News (The Daily News, an English language newspaper printed in Mexico City) used to be two pesos and now it is five.

The husband in a couple who have never actively participated in the party circuit, although according to the other participants they aspire to do so, made these comments about the female tourists:

Have you watched how the girls act here? They'll just walk around and ignore whites. They're all here looking for tail. At home, in Illinois, they're locked up by mommy and daddy, while here there's no one to restrict them. Plus a Mexican is half-way between a black and a white lover. Lots of them want to fuck a blackman but just can't yet. So the Mexican is convenient. Also, there's the Latin lover angle.

In summary twenty-eight persons were interviewed about the tourists. Nineteen of these people protrayed them in a deprecatory fashion, seven made no comments and two emphasized the tourists' merits.

The beliefs concerning tourists are also manifested in the residents' accounts of their interaction with these people, and the evidence available from observing locations where socializing would be likely. When asked if they frequently interacted with the tourists, seventeen of the eighteen party participants interviewed replied negatively: the sole affirmative response was attributed to "business." The same question produced differing responses from the ten non-party participants. Four confirmed that they often socialized with tourists, two said they occasionally interacted with them, two claimed to have contact with tourists during the course of business, and two claimed never to socialize with them. Party participants then differ significantly from the foreign residents who do not attend parties in the amount of socializing reportedly undertaken with tourists.

Observations confirm the accounts of this paucity of social interaction. The most popular tourist attraction in Puerto Vallarta is Los Muertos beach, an area which is lined with bar-restaurants. This area was observed between the hours of eleven in the morning and three in the afternoon for one week. None of the eighteen party participants informants, nor any other regular party participants were observed.

A clear pattern is evident in both the accounts and behavior of the party participants. Tourists are considered to be an undesirable

group and are accordingly avoided. Because of this avoidance one extensive source of new acquaintances who may offer "charm, wit, and grace" is excluded from consideration. It should be noted that many tourists visit for several weeks or a month, longer than the visits of many of the homeowners who are considered residents and who freely participate in the parties.

2. Resident Foreigners

Involuntary Absence. The party participants also maintain a set of beliefs which explain the absence of other foreign residents from the parties. Within these accounts there is a dichotomy between those which claim that an individual has been excluded by the other participants and those which acknowledge that an individual does not attend the parties by his own choice.

The accounts which claim that an individual has been excluded by the other party participants are associated with persons of comparable status. This person is distinct from individuals of lower status due to his secure financial position and possession of a house which is comparable to those owned by party participants. He is separated from persons of higher status by the absence of additional qualities such as personal fame, contacts with famous or prestigious persons, extreme wealth, or the possession of some singularly striking talent.

The accounts involving such a person involve the censorship of the individual by others in the foreign community. This may be based on several considerations:

1. An unwillingness to repay parties.
2. Conspicuous involvement in activities of interest to the police. For example, homosexuals dressing in drag, or showing an interest in Mexican boys; known marijuana users; or persons with foreign criminal records.
3. Repeated discussion of personal problems or belligerence regarding politics at parties.
4. A lack of "charm, wit, and grace."
5. An inability to discuss matters of interest to the party participants.
6. Potential involvement in activities of interest to the police. For example, women with no clear account of their means of support or who associate frequently with Mexicans may be suspected of being prostitutes. Young people may be suspected of marijuana use.

These bases for exclusion vary in their specificity. The first two involve specific conditions which must be fulfilled. They are also bases which are most frequently mentioned regarding a specific individual. The third basis is less distinct and may involve the evaluation of other personal attributes. The final three bases involve indeterminate criteria and were never mentioned in connection with particular persons. Instead they comprise a general grounds for exclusion which may be invoked at will. For example, a party participant who was asked why so few young foreigners attend parties replied they are dangerous since they are likely to be involved with marijuana.

Voluntary absence. The accounts which acknowledge that an individual does not desire to participate in the party circuit are associated with persons of either higher or lower status. The former category is comprised of the fifty to seventy-five individuals who possess the previously mentioned additional attributes such as an airplane, extreme wealth, or pretigious contacts. These factors frequently are associated with great personal mobility. Many individuals in this category use their Puerto Vallarta houses for brief, irregular visits during which they may be accompanied by personal friends from their North American homes. They are not frequently involved in social engagements larger than a dinner for three or four couples and thus minimize their contacts with the other foreign residents. The party participants accept their decisions not to attend parties since they are only briefly or irregularly in the town, and because a sufficient number of the party participants possess great wealth or prestige. This permits the latter individuals to avoid being stigmatized as an inferior social group due to the absence from their numbers of so many people of great wealth.

Accounts which acknowledge that an individual has chosen not to participate in the parties are also associated with persons of lower status. While most of these persons are disqualified from party participation due to their lack of a suitable house some claim to have no interest in the parties and may even denigrate those who regularly attend them. The party participants offer several accounts of this behavior which both acknowledge--that the individual has expressed a lack of interest in the parties and yet which attempt to rationalize this rejection.

One practice is to criticize the party rejector for his association with tourists or for engaging in undesirable activities, such as drunkenness. This is particularly important since it is frequently asserted by the party rejectors that those who regularly attend them are interested only in excessive drinking. This latter opinion was volunteered by six of the nine party non-participants during formal interviews. Attention to such matters by the regular participants attempts to demean the alleged self-righteousness of those who vocally reject the parties.

Another practice is to point out the occasions when a party rejector accepts an invitation to a party. This challenges the credibility of an individual's claim that he has no desire to attend parties. A person may repeatedly express no interest in attending parties, but his attendance at one party may be used to support the party participants' claim that it is the lack of an invitation, and not a lack of desire, which accounts for an individual's absence.

Other accounts regarding the lower status party rejectors are based on the latter's frequent association with Mexicans through marriage, business, or friendship. Persons who prefer the company of Mexicans are tolerated and may be considered eccentric rather than malicious. Although the three foreigners of this category who were interviewed expressed disgust at the activities of the party participants their denunciations seldom necessitated a rebuttal by the latter. Instead, these people remain socially invisible to the party participants and are of little concern. When a disparaging remark is made by a party rejector it may be excused as a manifestation of harmless eccentricity.

It is important to note that these accounts are in a frequently changing relationship to one another. For example, it is a widespread practice for those who are ultimately rejected by the party participants to subsequently claim to have had no interest in attending the parties. In this way they manage to reject their rejectors. This is illustrated by the story of one foreign couple who had made a persistent effort to gain acceptance into the party circuit. Repeatedly they were rejected. Several reasons for this rejection were offered by the active participants: their rented apartment was too small, the wife was backbiting, the husband told endless stories, they sold unneeded household appliances which led to speculation about their financial status, and the husband's vaunted professional skills were suspected of being false. Gradually the couple's attitude changed from a desire to participate, to aloofness, and ultimately to hostility and rejection directed towards the party participants.

3. Mexicans

There is also a set of beliefs which account for the absence of Mexicans at the parties. Sixteen of the eighteen party participants who were interviewed reported they seldom socialize with their Mexican neighbors. The two foreigners who visit their neighbors do so in the context of serving holiday drinks, attending block parties, or hosting small parties for neighborhood children. Since these neighbors are usually laborers it may be assumed that little social interaction occurs between the party participants and the Mexican lower class.

Many more party participants interact with Mexicans of the merchant or professional groups. Half of the eighteen informants reportedly socialize with such people although this interaction may occur at an occasional foreign party. No party participant informant claimed that their Mexican acquaintances constituted a significant number of their social relations.

Most social interaction with Mexicans then is reserved for the few individuals of professional or merchant status who occasionally attend foreign parties. Additional social contact is provided by the daily meetings with vendors and merchants, and participation in customary gatherings such as Christmas celebrations and fiestas for construction workers.

The party participants presented several accounts of the infrequency of Mexican-American interaction. According to seven of the eighteen informants the Mexicans do not like the foreigners and have no desire to socialize with them. This attitude is expressed in statements such as:

> I've had contact with very few Mexicans. Before, I've invited a few to come to my home but they didn't show up. We mainly have other contacts: S., a friend who has an American wife but still doesn't come. Shopping every day and our maid are the only real ones.

and,

> . . . I don't think they really care to make contact with Americans. As F. summed it up: They want you for two weeks in the Posada Vallarta. No more.

and finally,

> We see our servant, although with no social contact. There are two societies in P.V.: One American, one Mexican. Generally, we personally like them and they like us, but Americans aren't popular anywhere in Mexico.

A second account, mentioned by seven of the interviewes, made reference to the rigid class structure of Mexico with its various strictures governing behavior between the classes. This purportedly provided a model for defining the relations between Mexicans and foreigners. Since lower class Mexicans "do not feel comfortable" associating with their indigenous class superiors they feel similarly in the company of their foreign superiors. One lady remarked:

> I go to weddings, christenings, some parties. Mainly see professional people, and neighbors. They invite you and are pleased that you come, but won't accept return invitations. This is a result of their class differences. They're very class conscious. Don't mix level to level in their own groups. This is true of any society where their people are in serving jobs. Business people are the ones I may socially deal with at parties. They'll accept return invitations.

Another couple explained:

> Wife: They have so much pride. Won't impinge unless they can repay.
>
> Husband: We're not big spenders. Don't try to entertain kids. The former occupant did and we hear it got to be resented. We've never thrown our pool open to the block. They respect us since they wouldn't do it in the same situation. Americans are open and this is a weakness to Mexicans.

Eleven of the party participant informants explained the lack of Mexican-American interaction as a product of cultural and language barriers. All agreed that the difficulties created by the disparity between the two groups in schooling, heritage, and interests inhibited contact.

One woman commented:

> There's two societies here which mix very little. Maybe this isn't true elsewhere, but there is a social difference, an education gap. What do you talk about? Men can talk a bit more about business things. We haven't read the same things or been to the same places or have the same past.

And a United States citizen who is married to a Mexican woman remarked:

> Some Mexicans say they'd socialize if they had an opportunity to. Those who are bilingual can and do mix a bit. Seldom, too, is an American invited to a Mexican party or vice versa. Their decisions are based more on emotion. They just enjoy different things from us.

The party participant's comments about those Mexicans who do periodically appear at parties serve to further emphasize the broader differences between the two communities. Eight party participants volunteered opinions about the Mexicans whom they consider to be their friends and in each case the Mexican was described as "Americanized."

One party participant said:

> The ones I see I don't think of as Mexican. Z. was educated in Montreal, O. is very American, and the L's do business in the States and G. has been in the U.S. and is more American than Mexican.

Another man commented:

> I see some prominent merchants who I know politely: Y. and the bank manager. And E., our "token" Mexican; Dr. N. and his wife. She is American. O. at CMA; P. and R. We really like her. She's more U.S. than me.

D. Summary

Many of the foreign residents in Puerto Vallarta express an ambivalent attitude towards social interaction. They claim that their social group is a meritocracy in which one is accepted by possessing a pleasing personality. Although it is not the goal of this study to comprehend the basis for this belief, there does seem to be a severe disapproval of the idea that wealth can buy social acceptance. Yet the foreign residents, who are generally well-to-do, also tend to favor socializing with their socio-economic peers. Since these two perspectives lead to conflicting patterns of social life, it is to be expected that some means of reconciling them will be established.

Homeownership provides a means of mediating the two conflicting viewpoints. It allows the foreign residents to socialize with persons of comparable status without making it necessary for them to blatantly inquire into the condition of anyone's pocketbook: wealth and status can be assumed. Later, after these delicate matters have been disposed of, personal merits are permitted a limited role in determining who will continue to attend parties. In effect then, the party participants allow someone to engage in partying on the basis of his "charm, wit, and grace," provided that he also is wealthy enough to own a house in the town.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A. Implications of the Approach

The preceding thesis has been an attempt to develop a more powerful approach for analyzing the social construction of reality. By more "powerful" I refer to its capacity to comprehend not only the rules of a given social reality, but also the factors underlying those rules. Although the reader is now undoubtedly familiar with the approach I have presented, a review of some of its more salient features should be valuable.

First, it has been demonstrated that Erving Goffman understates the value of his approach when he applies it solely to encounters. Although encounters presumably have characteristics which make them isolates, they are not that different from other elements of social life. Thus, the extension of the concepts of rules of irrelevance and transformation into a wider domain seems both justified and necessary. With regards to the case presented in this essay, it would be difficult to understand the significance of homeowning without using some notion of the aforementioned rules. The study of recurring situations is clearly facilitated by Goffman's approach.

Second, the material on Puerto Vallarta also indicated a weakness in Goffman's approach. According to his focus, the situation constitutes a micro-universe of social norms which must be dealt with

by society's actors. His interest is fundamentally in the individual. This concern is justifiable, but it does preclude an understanding of how or why particular norms were selected.

Finally, it was posited that the weakness in Goffman's approach can be overcome by shifting our attention from the individual to the situation per se. It is axiomatic in the modern social sciences that we cannot hope to understand a person's actions unless we also understand the social situations which comprise so much of his life. Likewise, we cannot understand a situation without also understanding the various contingencies in the society which impinge upon it. At the very least this means that while people "make" reality, their construction job is greatly effected by the exigencies of their social milieu. The individualist approach tends to under-emphasize this fact and people are often treated as though they are embarking on a unique personal journey each time they enter a situation. This bias is misleading on at least two points. First, people have histories. They invariably bring memories of the same or similar experiences into their present circumstances. From this viewpoint it is unlikely that any situation is either totally unique, or an isolated slice of social life. Second, the rules governing a situation are seldom created in a vacuum. The rules may have a sort of coercive Gestalt, but this does not imply that they are their own causes. Instead, people define situations according to a complex series of pressures and choices from the wider society. Each situation has its own rules, but frequently these rules must be understood as derivatives of other situations or conditions. Social reality can still be conceptualized

as a matter of individual choice, but not of unlimited choice. The process of defining reality is above all a problem oriented endeavor. Rather than capricious choice or chance, the selection of the rules defining a situation can be seen as attempts to deal with some problem, real or imagined, actual or potential, experienced by people.

The approach I have outlined should prove useful in examining other situations. It is not necessary that all social life be reduced to the quest for information in order for such a perspective to be implemented. It is sufficient that we examine not only the performances of people in situations, but also the factors which effect the rules governing these performances. The most general conclusion of this thesis then is that situations, and the behavior of people following their rules, are only explainable by reference to the wider socio-economic conditions which impinge on them.

The preceding comments involve a general statement on social life and social theory. They claim that the approach I have developed more accurately reflects the nature of social life than other approaches. Yet there is also a more compelling reason for exploring the approach developed herein. By specifying the relationships of external factors to the rules of the situation it should be possible to formulate hypotheses that may be tested. Briefly, if the externally realized matter under scrutiny changes there should be a corresponding change (albeit delayed), in the situation's rules. The approach I have outlined thus has the virtue of generating testable hypotheses, a matter of no mean consequences. For example, it is possible to test the veracity of my

claim that homeownership is related to the party circuit, although such an endeavor must be postponed until the conditions surrounding homeowning have been changed.

B. Implications of the Findings

This thesis has been intended to illustrate the validity of a particular research strategy. However, it has also described the social life of a particular group of people. Thus, besides the general implications for research that I have already outlined, there are also more limited insights to be gained into the social life of the foreign residents in Puerto Vallarta. In this final section I will attempt to present several such insights which derive more from studying Puerto Vallarta than from adopting the approach I have presented.

First, there is a clear need for anthropologists studying social relations to pay attention to the material side of culture (Schwimmer, 1973:6). In studying such matters we frequently describe the minutia of interpersonal relations, and the various strategies employed by the parties to the interaction. Later, order will be superimposed upon the kaleidoscope of behavior by reference to norms or beliefs. This, in effect, presents a mythological rationalization for behavior. The stories recounted by the party participants provide an excellent example of such a rationale. However, these myths ascribe meanings to material objects (houses) and they, in turn, contribute largely to the nature of these myths. For example, the stories told by the party participants gave a meaning to houses that far exceeded their mere physical components. Yet, the physical nature of the houses, or more precisely, the difficulties in constructing them, contributed significantly to their symbolic

value. Studying the myths, the material objects, or the social interaction as isolated domains will lead to a fragmentary perspective. Each must be understood as it makes the others comprehensible.

Second, the Puerto Vallarta findings involve a readjustment of our concept of a unit of study. Traditionally, the anthropologist selects a group and describes its activities. This approach would be most unproductive if applied to the party participants. They do not constitute a group which does something (holds parties), as much as they are a collection of people who participate in an activity. It is not group membership that allows one to attend parties. Instead it is the ability to reciprocate parties that allows people to congregate repeatedly, thereby giving an onlooker the impression that he is observing a group at leisure. The implications of this fact are great. We must still choose a unit to study, and, most certainly, this involves looking at people. However, rather than labelling them a group and then attempting to derive the rules for their actions from this fact, it is more fruitful to examine their activities, and then to try to determine how their group identity and values derives from them. The difference in perspectives may be seen by comparing two sorts of social "groups." The activities of a Masonic Lodge derive from the fact of group membership. In order to understand them one need only refer to the fact that the individuals belong to the lodge, and that such activities are precisely what Masons do. A "group" of Little League parents who regularly hold pre-game picnics constitutes an entirely different matter. Here it is an activity, the participation is an activity by their children, that allows the adults

to congregate. When a person's son is unable to participate any longer the adult most likely will not attend the pre-game picnic. In this instance the activity would appear to have priority over group membership as a focus for the researchers attention.

On a more macroscopic scale, a focus on activity provides the basis for at least one contemporary ethnography. In Exchange in the Social Structure of the Orokaiva (1973), Schwimmer attempts to establish an activity, exchange, as an explanatory principle equal to membership in corporate descent groups. In both the Orokaiva and the party participants in Puerto Vallarta the focus is on the ability to participate in an activity, as opposed to any reference to group membership.

Finally, the data from Puerto Vallarta demonstrates the value of studying the wealthy. Studies of our own culture are of comparatively recent origin in anthropology. And within this area studies of the wealthy must occupy a miniscule portion. Yet, this long neglected group has a culture that is as valid and distinct as those of the racial and religious minorities more frequently studied by anthropologists. Hopefully, their study will interest more researchers in the future, since these people possess social and economic powers that reach far beyond their own circle of friends.

One particular issue the Puerto Vallarta data raises is the relationship of wealth to power. Although most of the party participants can certainly be described as wealthy it is highly questionable that they are truly powerful. In describing those people who we have come to call powerful, C. Wright Mills says:

> The power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. Whether they do or do not make such decisions is less important than the fact that they do occupy such pivotal positions: their failure to act, their failure to make decisions, is itself an act that is often of greater consequence than the decisions they do make. For they are in command of the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society. They rule the big corporations. They run the machinery of state and claim its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment. They occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which are now centered the effective means of power and the wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy. (Mills, 1956:3-4.)

The group described in this essay clearly does not qualify as powerful, if this term is to denote the ability of a person to force others to comply with his or her demands. In order to fully occupy a position in society the individual must participate actively in the important decisions that express power. Yet, the members of the foreign community have largely isolated themselves from such decision making situations. The party participants then do not represent a unity of social prestige, wealth, and power. Instead, they seem to be marked by an extensive rift between wealth and power.

Perhaps the people's alienation from the pivotal points of power provides a basis for their deep ambivalence towards wealth. The prestige and wealth are desired, but simultaneously suspected. Men who have been driven by great expectations of themselves suddenly find that their retirement is an adjustment for which they are ill prepared.

This ambivalence is also manifested in the resident's attitudes towards social life. Wealth is desired, since it allows one to socialize with a 'higher' class of people. However, the data presented clearly indicates that the notion that wealth can buy friendship is abhorred. The very complexity of their social rules can be seen as an attempt to disguise the importance of wealth and exaggerate the significance of personal merits.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to speculate as to the causes of this ambivalence. However, it seems possible that this condition is related to the previously discussed divorce between wealth and power. If so, the ambivalence may be a growing phenomenon as more segments of the population become typified by wealth, while simultaneously being removed from positions of real power. This phenomena should be of interest to a broad spectrum of social scientists, since it may be indicative of sweeping structural changes in our society.

NOTES

NOTES

1. Page 28: Air tours are organized through travel agencies in the United States and Canada. These agencies maintain contracts with several hotels to provide accommodations and meals for the one to two week tours. Airplane arrivals include those visitors who arrive by one of the scheduled airlines such as Hughes Air West, Mexicana, or Aeronaves de Mexico. Other visitors arrive via the Compostela highway: several first-class buslines connect Puerto Vallarta with Tepic, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Nogales, and Tiquana, and a number of persons arrive by automobile, particularly in the summer months.

2. Page 29: Due to the package organization of these tours it is difficult to estimate the air tourists' expenditures in the town.

3. Page 33: The exact percentage of homeowners in the directory is unknown: even the two compilers of the directory were unable to specify which individuals owned, versus rented, their accommodations. However the statement that a great majority of the residents own their homes is corroborated by Ramar's disclosure that the four hundred foreign residents, overwhelmingly couples, live in one hundred seventy-eight houses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Public Investment in the Banderas Region through 1969 (pesos)

	Project	Cost
1.	Barra de Navidad Puerto Vallarta Highway . . .	143,000,000
2.	International Airport . . .	68,460,000
3.	Harbor facility in Puerto Vallarta	45,000,000
4.	Electric power line connecting Compostela, Puerto Vallarta, Mascota, and Talpa. . . . . (includes substations).	21,500,000
5.	Various works including telecommunications, irrigation, water-purification, sewage, hospitals, schools.	52,485,133
6.	Compostela-Puerto Vallarta Highway	72,000,000
		402,445,133

Source: Economy Department, Jalisco State Government, 1970 B:8.

APPENDIX II

Hotel Investments in Puerto Vallarta 1965-69 (pesos)

Hotel	Investments
Posada Vallarta	38,000,000
Delfin	16,000,000
Tropicana	12,000,000
Playa de Oro	7,000,000
Oceano	5,000,000
Playa Las Glorias	4,000,000
Garza Blanca	3,500,000
Los Arcos	2,500,000
Rio Cuale	1,500,000
El Dorado	1,000,000
Posada de la Selva	2,500,000
Rio	3,000,000
Rosita	6,000,000
Paraiso	1,500,000
El Pedregal	800,000
Chula Vista	500,000
Marsol	1,800,000
Central	1,000,000
Camino Real	100,000,000
Hacienda del Lobe	5,000,000
	212,808,000

Source: Economy Department, Jalisco State Government, 1970 B:9.